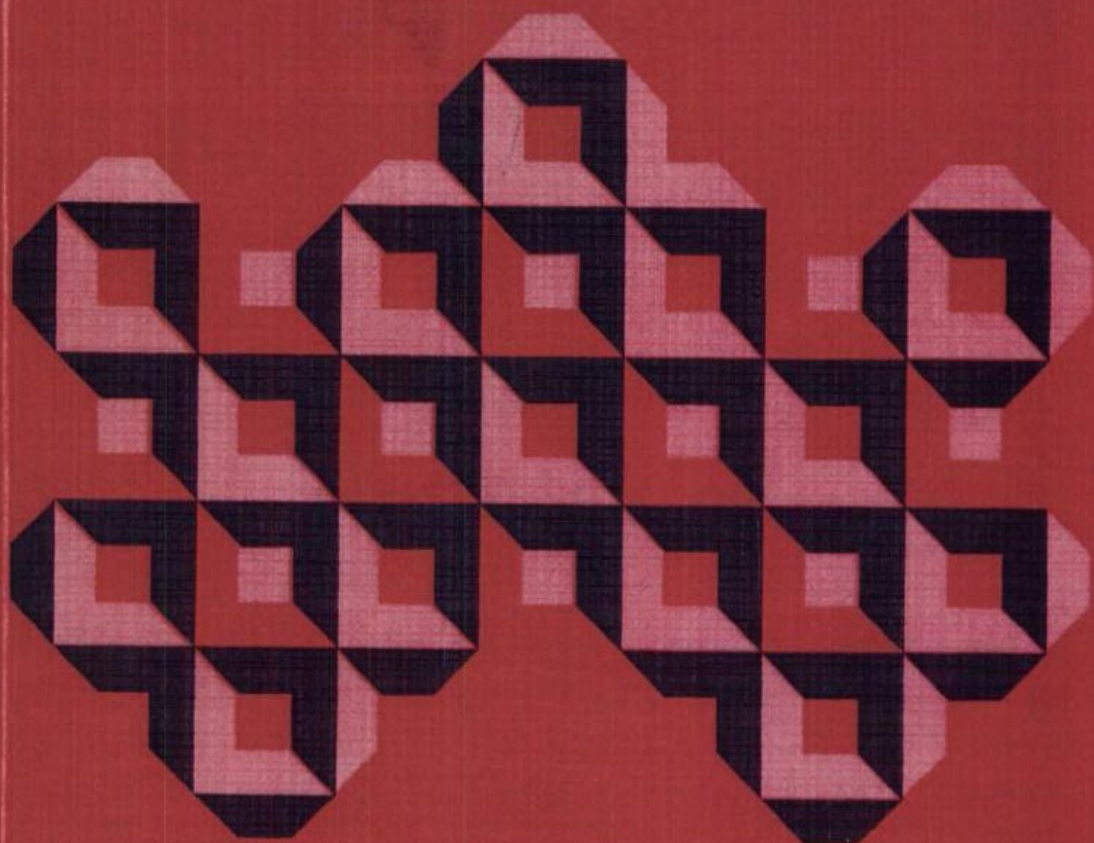John Hill

Friend or Foe?
The Figure of Babylon in
the Book of Jeremiah MT

BRILL

FRIEND OR FOE?
THE FIGURE OF BABYLON IN THE
BOOK OF JEREMIAH MT

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION SERIES

VOLUME 40

FRIEND OR FOE?
THE FIGURE OF BABYLON
IN THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH MT

BY

JOHN HILL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Texts

The printed form of the Hebrew biblical text used in this study is that of the *Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (eds. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1984). The electronic form of BHS used in this study is the *Hebrew Bible Massoretic Text* (Michigan-Claremont [United Bible Society]) distributed by N.B.Informatics, 1992.

The Greek bibical text is that of the *Septuaginta*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979. The electronically formatted form of the LXX used is based on that of Robert Craft (CATSS), University of Pennsylvania, 1991.

The English text is that of the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). The electronically formatted form of the NRSV is that of the CCAT, distributed by Nota Bene, 1995.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations used in the study are taken from "Journal of Biblical Literature Instructions for Contributors," *Society of Biblical Literature Membership Directory and Handbook 1994.* Decatur GA: The Society of Biblical Literature, 1994, 223-240.

INTRODUCTION

Whether this is Jerusalem or Babylon, we know not. (William Blake)[1]

The suggestion that the figures of Babylon and Jerusalem are so similar that they can hardly be distinguished runs counter to the conventional understanding of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, which is well expressed in Rev 17:5: Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς ("Babylon the great, mother of whores and of earth's abominations").[2] A reading of the book of Jeremiah MT however shows that, besides the conventional understanding of Babylon as a figure essentially evil and opposed to Yhwh and Judah, there co-exists an unexpectedly positive understanding, in which Babylon is metaphorically identified with Judah.

The present study is an interpretation of the figure of Babylon in the book of Jeremiah MT, both in its conventional and unconventional representations. It explores how Babylon functions as a metaphor in Jeremiah MT. As such its approach is synchronic, and its interest is in Babylon as a literary rather than a historical figure.

The impetus for such a study comes from two sources. One is the relative neglect of the figure of Babylon in studies of the book of Jeremiah. There have been studies of Babylon in chaps. 50-51 MT by Bellis and Reimer, while shorter essays and journal articles have given some attention to texts in other parts of the book which refer to Babylon.[3] What has been lacking is a study which

---

[1] William Blake, "The Four Zoas," *William Blake: A Selection of Poems and Letters* (ed. J. Bronowski; London: Penguin, 1958) 155. Quoted by David Malouf in the frontispiece of his novel *Remembering Babylon* (London: Vintage, 1994).

[2] While in Rev 17:5 the figure of Babylon represents Rome, in sixteenth century Protestant polemic it represented the Roman Church, and in the writings of Blake the state power of his time (Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* [New York: Harvest/HBJ, 1983] 95).

[3] The studies of Babylon in Jeremiah 50-51 MT have been by Alice Odgen Bellis, *The Structure and Composition of Jeremiah 50:2-51:58* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen Biblical Press, 1995); David J. Reimer, *The Oracles Against Babylon in Jeremiah 50-51: A Horror Among the Nations* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press,

investigates the role of Babylon in the book as a whole. The second source is the current state of Jeremiah research and its history in the twentieth century. It is within this context that the choice of a synchronic approach has been made.

1. *Setting a Context: Twentieth Century Jeremiah Research*

In the closing years of the century Jeremiah research is at a particularly interesting point. Previously dominated by issues of the book's compositional history and focussed on the world behind the text, research into the book has started to take a different direction.[4]

The first section of the following review of twentieth century Jeremiah research highlights the focus on the book's compositional history. The second section points to the emergence of studies whose interest is the world of the text. The review is by no means intended to be exhaustive. Rather, it focuses on particular aspects of Jeremiah research that form the backdrop to the present study.[5]

1993). For essays and articles which refer to Babylon in Jeremiah MT in passing, see e.g., Walter Brueggemann, "At the Mercy of Babylon: A Subversive Re-reading of Empire," *A Social Reading of the Old Testament: Prophetic Approaches to Israel's Communal Life* (ed. Patrick D. Miller; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1994) 114-117; Werner E. Lemke, "Nebuchadrezzar, my Servant," *CBQ* 28 (1966) 45-50; R. Martin-Achard, "Esaïe 47 et la tradition prophétique sur Babylone," *Prophecy: Essays Presented to Georg Fohrer* (ed. J. A. Emerton; BZAW 150; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1980) 102-104; Thomas W. Overholt, "King Nebuchadnezzar in the Jeremiah Tradition," *CBQ* 30 (1968) 39-48; Louis Stulman, "Insiders and Outsiders in the Book of Jeremiah: Shifts in Symbolic Arrangements," *The Prophets: A Sheffield Reader* (ed. Philip Davies; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996) 299-304.

    [4] As noted by Robert P. Carroll, "Surplus of Meaning and the Conflict of Interpretations: A Dodecade of Jeremiah Studies (1984-1995)," *Currents in Research* 4 (1996) 116.

    [5] For a very extensive review of recent Jeremiah research, see Carroll, "A Dodecade," 115-159. He himself notes that a full summary of Jeremiah research would constitute a book in itself (*ibid.*, 138).

    The following section also draws on the summaries of the history and development of critical study of the book provided by: John Bright, *Jeremiah* (AB 21; New York: Doubleday, 1965) LV-LXXVII; Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 38-50; Thomas W. Overholt, "Interpreting Jeremiah," *RSR* 14 (1988) 330-334; Leo G. Perdue, "Jeremiah in Modern Research: Approaches and Issues," *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies* (eds. Leo G. Perdue, B. W. Kovacs; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1984) 1-32;

1.1. *Jeremiah Research: The World Behind the Text*

The direction for much of twentieth century Jeremiah research was set by the work of Duhm, who viewed the book as consisting of poetic sayings of Jeremiah, the writings of Baruch, and additions from later periods.[6] Later and perhaps more influential than Duhm's work was that of Mowinckel, who proposed that the book originated from four sources, each with its own redactor.[7] Source A is a collection of the prophet's oracles, and is found in the poetry of chaps. 1-25; source B is a collection of narrative material of the prophet's actions and words, and is distributed through chaps. 19-44; source C is material whose style is reminiscent of the Deuteronomistic tradition, and is distributed through chaps. 7-44; source D, best represented by chaps. 30-31, is a post-exilic source.[8]

As Carroll has remarked, "Duhm and Mowinckel have effectively set the agenda for modern Jeremiah studies".[9] Later scholars debated issues about the book within this framework, even though they might clearly disagree with Mowinckel's position. For example, while Rietzschel identified the various blocks of tradition which comprise the present form of Jeremiah MT, he repudiated the view that prose and poetic material existed in isolation from each other, and that they constitute separate sources.[10]

Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, *Studien zum Jeremiabuch: ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Entstehung des Jeremiabuches* (FRLANT 118; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978) 11-18 (a survey of the more recent approaches only); Wilhelm Rudolph, *Jeremia* (HAT 12; 3rd edition, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1968) XIV-XIX (a description of Mowinckel's theory); Winfried Thiel, *Die Deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1-25* (WMANT 41; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973) 3-31; J. A. Thompson, *Jeremiah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 33-50.

[6] Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia* (KHAT 11; Tübingen/Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1901) XVI-XVII.

[7] Sigmund Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia* (Kristiana: Dybward: 1914).

[8] For his source A, see *ibid.*, 17-24. For source B, *ibid.*, 24-30. Perhaps the best tag for source B is that used by Mowinckel himself, "eine geschichtliche Erzählung" (*ibid.*, 24). For source C, *ibid.*, 31-45. His view of the source C material is unflattering, to say the least. He describes it as monotonous, possessing little animation, and using such a small range of words that beginners in Hebrew could read the material without their Gesenius (*ibid.*, 33). For source D, *ibid.*, 45-48. For its post-exilic provenance, see *ibid.*, 57.

[9] Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 40. For examples of commentaries which build on and refine the work of Duhm and Mowinckel, see e.g., Rudolph, *Jeremia*, esp. xiv-xxii; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, esp. 33-56.

[10] Claus Rietzschel, *Das Problem der Urrolle: ein Beitrag zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Jeremiabuches* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1966) 23.

He proposed that the book consists of four blocks of tradition: prophecies of doom against Judah and Jerusalem (chaps. 1-24), prophecies of doom against the foreign nations (chaps. 25, 46-51), prophecies of salvation for Israel (chaps. 26-35), and the biography of Jeremiah (chaps. 36-44).[11]

Even the works of Carroll and Holladay, whose views about the central issues in Jeremiah research are diametrically opposed, are influenced positively or negatively by Mowinckel's approach.[12] Holladay does not accept Mowinckel's source theory because the differences between the poetry and the prose sermons do not point to the presence of different sources.[13] Influenced by the work of Rietzschel, he explains the growth of the book as a process of expansion. His hypothesis is that the first scroll of Jeremiah (Jer 36:4) and the second scroll (36:32) provide the foundation of the present book and that both can be reconstructed.[14] At the same time Holladay addresses questions raised by Mowinckel's work about issues such as the extent and provenance of source C; the extent of source B and its authorship by Baruch; the contribution of chap. 36 to an understanding of the book's origins and growth.[15]

Holladay's work represents what can be called a reconstructionist approach to the text. His commentary is based on the premise that the chronology of Jeremiah's career can be reconstructed and that the setting of his speeches and actions can be established.[16]

---

[11] Rietzschel sees the book's development as occurring over several centuries (*ibid.*, 91). The latest level of the tradition is represented by the oracles against the nations which reached their present form in the time of the Maccabees (*ibid.*, 84-90). His analysis of chaps. 25 and 46-51 represents the major part of his work (*ibid.*, 25-90). He then works back to the earlier levels of the tradition: chaps. 36-44 (*ibid.*, 95-110), chaps. 26-35 (*ibid.*, 110-122), chaps. 1-24 (*ibid.*, 122-125).

[12] The works in questions are those of Carroll, *Jeremiah*; William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-25* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); ———, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah Chapters 26-52* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989).

[13] Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 15.

[14] Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 16, 19-23). He acknowledges his debt to the work of Rietzschel, but at the same believes that the book's development is a more complicated and untidy process than that outlined by the latter (*ibid.*, 14).

[15] Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 12.

[16] "I have become convinced that the data for a reconstruction of the chronology of Jrm's (*sic.*) career, and for the establishment of fairly secure settings for his words and actions, are attainable, and this commentary is based on such a reconstruction" (Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 1). For another statement on this point, see his *Jeremiah 2*, 1-2.

Holladay gives to these settings such precise dates and places that his commentary represents not merely *a* reconstructionist approach but *the* reconstructionist approach.[17] It is hard to see how, without descending to a naive literalism, that anyone could go further down this path.

At the opposite end of the spectrum stands the work of Carroll.[18] If Holladay is *the* reconstructionist, Carroll is *the* redactionist.[19] Where the former can reconstruct the precise settings and dates for the ministry of the prophet, the latter sees little if any connection between the book and a historical Jeremiah: "To the question 'What is the relation of the book of Jeremiah to the historical Jeremiah?' no answer can be given".[20] The figure of the prophet is firstly a construct of the text.[21] Without the redactional framework, there is no Jeremiah.[22]

The question of the extent and authorship of Mowinckel's source C has given rise to a number of studies which address the role of the Deuteronomists in the book's composition. Within this body

---

[17] The following are examples of the precision Holladay claims: 9:9-10 (9:10-11 NRSV) is set in winter of the year 600 (*Jeremiah 1*, 304); 9:16-21 (9:17-22 NRSV) in "December 601 or early 600" (*ibid.*, 312); 11:1-17 "the festival of booths in September/October 594" (*ibid.*, 351); 14:1-15:9 in "November/December 601" (*ibid.*, 427).

[18] Carroll's first major study of the book of Jeremiah was *From Chaos to Covenant: Uses of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (London: SCM, 1981). Both this and his more recent OTL commentary are informed by a similar approach to the book.

[19] A more tempting epithet for Carroll is *the* deconstructionist. However, given the association of this term with the work of particular theorists such as Derrida and de Man, the term is not so suitable in the present context. At the same time, Carroll himself uses the word "deconstruction" to describe the effect of his preferred method of interpreting the book: e.g., as in his "Dismantling the Book of Jeremiah and Deconstructing the Prophet," *Wünschet Jerusalem Frieden* (eds. Matthias Augustin, Klaus Dietrich Schunck; Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums 13; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988) 291-302. See also his "Synchronic Deconstructions of Jeremiah," 39-51.

[20] Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 62.

[21] Robert P. Carroll, "Radical Clashes of Will and Style: Recent Commentary Writing on the Book of Jeremiah," *JSOT* 45 (1989) 102. Carroll assumes that Jeremiah did exist, but argues that the book does not provide us with any access to him (*Jeremiah*, 63).

[22] "If the redactional framework is removed, the figure of Jeremiah disappears from the poetry and the prose. Thus the framework provides the kind of information necessary for understanding who the speaker of these utterances is and, on occasion, the circumstances in which such statements are made" (*ibid.*, 48).

of research there are also quite different opinions. The divergent
views about the extent and provenance of Mowinckel's source C
material are well reflected in the conclusions of Holladay and
Weippert on the one hand, those of Hyatt and Thiel on the other,
and the mediating views of Janssen and Nicholson.[23]

At one end of the spectrum Thiel argues that not only does
the source C material originate with the Deuteronomists, but that
the whole book itself has undergone a systematic Deuteronomis-
tic redaction. Hyatt also accepts that there was a Deuteronomis-
tic edition of the book, but unlike Thiel he sees a direct connec-
tion between Jeremiah and the Deuteronomistic editing of the
book.[24] For Holladay and Weippert much of the source C materi-
al often attributed to the Deuteronomists comes from either from
a tradition closely associated with the prophet or from Jeremiah
himself.[25] The views of Janssen and Nicholson are mediating in
that, while they do not argue for a Deuteronomistic redaction of
the whole book, they do attribute the source C material to the
Deuteronomists who collected, shaped and reinterpreted the
prophet's message in accordance with their particular theologi-
cal interests.[26]

A different approach to the book's composition is put forward

---

[23] Besides a summary in his commentary (*Jeremiah 2*, 74-75) Holladay addres-
ses this question in some earlier writing: William L. Holladay, "Prototypes and
Copies: A New Approach to the Poetry-Prose Problem in the Book of Jeremi-
ah," *JBL* 79 (1960); 351-367, "A Fresh Look at 'Source B' and 'Source C' in Jer-
emiah," *VT* 25 (1975) 394-412; Helga Weippert, *Die Prosareden des Jeremiabuches*
(BZAW 136; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973); J. Philip Hyatt, "Jeremiah: Exegesis," *IB*
5:794-1142; Thiel, *Jeremia 1-25*; Enno Janssen, *Juda in der Exilszeit: ein Beitrag zur
Frage der Entstehung des Judentums* (FRLANT 69; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und
Ruprecht, 1956); E. W. Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles: A Study of the Prose Tra-
dition in the Book of Jeremiah* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967).

[24] "D sometimes preserves genuine prophecies of Jeremiah in the prophet's
words; sometimes he gives the gist of Jeremiah's prophecies in his own words;
and sometimes he composes freely and departs from Jeremiah's thoughts" (Hyatt,
"Jeremiah: Exegesis," 789). Hyatt's position is described by Holladay as "less ex-
treme" than that of Thiel (*Jeremiah 2*, 12).

[25] E.g., Holladay proposes that 11:1-14 and 18:1-12 are from Jeremiah him-
self (see *Jeremiah 1*, 350-351, and *ibid.*, 514 respectively), and that chaps. 26 and
36 come from Baruch (see *Jeremiah 2*, 103 and 253-254 respectively). On the
Jeremian provenance of 7:1-15 and 18:1-12 see also Weippert, *Die Prosareden*,
38-67.

[26] An extensive treatment of the Deuteronomistic theological interests which
are reflected in the Jeremian prose sermons is given by Nicholson, *Preaching to
the Exiles*, 39-115.

by McKane.[27] Accepting the distinction between poetry and prose
material, he proposes the idea of a "rolling *corpus*" as the key to
explaining the book's compositional history, which extends over
a long period of time. The rolling *corpus* means that "small piec-
es of pre-existing text trigger exegesis or commentary".[28] The
pre-existing text may be either poetry or prose, so that poetry can
generate prose material, prose can generate prose, and less usu-
ally poetry can generate poetry.[29] An important difference between
the poetry and prose material is that, unlike the pre-existing prose
material, the pre-existing poetic material mostly represents the
words of Jeremiah.[30]

In regard to the origins of the prose material, McKane rejects
the conclusions of both Weippert and Thiel, arguing that they
both place too much weight on the existence or non-existence
of parallels between the prose of the book of Jeremiah and that
of the Deuteronomists. Of more importance, he believes, is the
study of how the prose functions within the context of the whole
book.[31]

The influence of Duhm can also be seen in the study of the
material attributed to Baruch. Duhm's proposal that this mate-
rial is a single source is the starting point for Wanke's study.[32]
The latter concludes that the Baruch material consists of three
originally independent and different blocks of tradition. 19:1-20:6;
chaps. 26-29 and 36 form one, chaps. 37-44 a second, and chap.
45 together with 51:59-64 the third.[33] Wanke's work is taken up
in turn and critiqued by Graupner, who rejects the former's un-
derstanding that the material originally existed in an indepen-
dent form.[34]

Another spin-off from the work of Duhm and Mowinckel, which

---

[27] William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* (2 vols.;
ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986-1996).

[28] McKane, *ibid.*, 1:lxxxiii.

[29] *Ibid.*, 1:lxii-lxxxiii.

[30] *Ibid.*, 1:lxxxiii.

[31] *Ibid.*, 1:xlvi-xlvii.

[32] Gunther Wanke, *Untersuchungen zur sogennanten Baruchschrift* (BZAW 122;
Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971).

[33] Wanke calls each of the different blocks an "Überlieferungskomplex" (*ibid.*,
144).

[34] Axel Graupner, *Auftrag und Geschick des Propheten Jeremia: literarische Eigen-
art, Herkunft und Intention vordeuteronomistischer Prosa im Jeremiabuch* (BTS 15;
Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991) 184-185.

reflects a similar interest in the world behind the text, is the bio-
graphical studies of Jeremiah. Probably the best known in the
English speaking world is that of Skinner, whose aim was "to trace
the growth of personal piety in the history of Jeremiah and...to
elucidate the significance of pre-exilic prophecy as seen through
his mind".[35] Where Skinner spoke glowingly of the individualism
of Jeremiah's piety, his moral integrity and the depth of his prayer,
later scholarship reacted negatively to "the Skinnerian approach".[36]

In the German speaking world, Reventlow similarly rejects ap-
proaches according to which the book reveals the prophet's per-
sonality and spirituality.[37] In establishing the grounds for his ap-
proach to the book of Jeremiah, Reventlow uses the analogy of
the critical study of the psalms, in which there was a shift from
an understanding of the psalms as the expression of individual
piety to a form-critically founded view of them as communal, cul-
tic texts.

He argues that the study of the book must proceed on form
critical grounds so that the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the forms of prophet-
ic preaching can be established.[38] Using this methodology, he anal-
yses some of the same texts as did Skinner, but ends up with quite
different conclusions. The book reveals nothing of Jeremiah's
individuality and personality, since the "I" of the confessions is
nothing else than an expression of the prophet's ministry as rep-
resentative of the people before Yhwh.[39] Both the work of Skin-
ner and the response to it are focussed on the world behind the
text.

---

[35] John Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion: Studies in the Life of Jeremiah* (Cambridge:
University Press, 1936) 16.

[36] For Skinner's treatment of the piety of Jeremiah, see *Prophecy and Religion*,
222-230. The term "the Skinnerian approach" is borrowed from Carroll, who
uses it to describe "writing on Jeremiah from a biographical standpoint" (*From
Chaos to Covenant*, 5-6).

[37] Henning Graf Reventlow, *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich bei Jeremiah* (Güters-
loh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963) 9-10.

[38] *Ibid.*, 10.

[39] *Ibid.*, 259.

1.2. *Jeremiah Research: The World of the Text*

While the book's compositional history have dominated Jeremiah research, recent years have seen the appearance of studies whose concern has been the world of the text. Among these can be included the commentary of Clements, who sees in the book a clear theological structure. In the days leading up to the events of 587 the prophet's message is one of judgment. However when the nation is on the point of destruction and there is despair about the future, he responds with promises of hope and restoration.[40]

An interest in the world of the text is also reflected in several more recent studies of the confessions (chaps. 11-20). The work of Smith centres on the laments of Jeremiah and their context. While issues of redaction are important for him, he also aims to explain how chaps. 11-20 function as part of the book.[41] Diamond has also analysed the laments individually, their significance when incorporated into a larger context of chaps. 11-20, and how these chapters function as a whole.[42]

A study which has focussed only on the world of the text is that of Polk.[43] His work is informed by an understanding of the text as a literary work which constructs its own world. The individual parts of the text are in relationship with one another, so that the meaning of the parts emerges primarily from a consideration of the relationship of one part with the others and with the whole. Of secondary importance for the text's meaning are authorial intention, the reconstructed world behind the text, and the meaning of a particular text at a point prior to its incorporation into the final form of the book.[44]

---

[40] R. E. Clements, *Jeremiah* (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Atlanta: John Knox, 1988) 9.

[41] Mark S. Smith, *The Laments of Jeremiah and Their Contexts* (SBLMS 42; eds. E. F. Campbell, Adele Yarbro Collins; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) xviii, 43-68.

[42] A. R. Diamond, *The Confessions of Jeremiah in Context: Scenes of Prophetic Drama* (JSOTSup 45; Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), esp. 177-191.

There are also other smaller synchronic studies such as those of Alexander Rofé, "The Arrangement of the Book of Jeremiah," *ZAW* 101 (1989) 390-398; Christopher R. Seitz, "The Prophet Moses and the Canonical Shape of Jeremiah," *ZAW* 101 (1989) 3-27; Joel Rosenberg, "Jeremiah and Ezekiel," *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (eds. Robert Alter, Frank Kermode; Cambridge: Belknap, 1987) 184-286.

[43] Timothy Polk, *The Prophetic Persona: Jeremiah and the Language of the Self* (JSOTSup 32; Sheffield: JSOT, 1984) 1984.

[44] *Ibid.*, 15.

Polk believes that the historical Jeremiah has been the focus of critical research with the result that "the biblically depicted Jeremiah has been virtually forgotten".[45] What emerges from his analysis of the text, particularly the confessions, is an understanding of the figure of Jeremiah as a paradigm. He reveals both the pain and purposes of Yhwh, and the suffering and the destiny of the nation.[46] Polk's study provides fresh and important insights into particular passages, and also raises questions about the relationship between synchronic and diachronic approaches to the book.

Twentieth century Jeremiah research then can be characterised as an enterprise which has generated a huge volume of scholarly material, reflected in the size and erudition of the commentaries of Carroll, Holladay and McKane. It has also given rise to major disagreements over important aspects of the book's interpretation, so that there are few significant issues about which a consensus exists. The present study's choice of a synchronic approach to the text has been made against this backdrop.

2. *The Scope of the Present Study*

The present study is a synchronic reading of Jeremiah MT which focuses on the figure of Babylon and its function as a metaphor within the text. In what follows the reasons for the choice of a synchronic reading are presented, together with the understanding of metaphor which underpins the study, and a summary of its content.

2.1. *The Choice of a Synchronic Approach*

The present study has chosen a synchronic approach because of the interpretive possibilities it offers, and the limits of the historical-critical. The choice is based on the recognition that any approach to the text has limits. Each approach has its own set of suppositions and its own set of questions which it brings to the text, and which generate a certain range of answers. In Jeremiah research the major questions put forward and the solutions pro-

---

[45] *Ibid.*, 9.
[46] *Ibid.*, 170-174.

posed have been those generated by the historical-critical approach. As a result there has been a neglect of the interpretive possibilities that a synchronic reading can generate with its own particular set of questions and range of answers.

While both the historical-critical and literary approaches both begin with the world of the text, they end up at different points. Beginning with the world of the text, critics using the historical-critical method have identified in the book of Jeremiah the presence of different literary styles, the lack of any organising principle and chronological disorder in the arrangement of many chapters.[47] Having catalogued these, they move to an analysis of the world behind the text to explain the difficulties with the book's present form.

Such a process has meant that the interpretive possibilities offered by a fuller and more extensive analysis of the world of the text are not always explored. Three examples illustrate the point.

First, the interpretation of verses in chaps. 1-6 which refer to the threat from the north has been dominated by attempts to identify it as a historical entity. As a result the emphasis on the world behind the text has led to a neglect of a most obvious interpretive possibility in 1:14, a critical text because it contains the book's first reference to the threat from the north.[48]

Second, the advice given by Jeremiah to the exiles in 29:4-7 MT has been seen as an expression of the prophet's political realism. He counsels them to submit to Babylon because Judah and

---

[47] For example, in the forward to his commentary Duhm immediately focuses on the presence of different literary styles and their relevance for determining the authorship of the book's contents (*Jeremia*, VII). In the introduction to the commentary, he takes up the issue in more detail (*ibid.*, XII-XVI). It is also in the introduction that he takes up the question of the book's lack of order, and where he makes his famous comment that the book's growth was like that of an out-of-control forest (*ibid.*, XX).

Similarly, Mowinckel begins with observations from the world of the text. The conspicuous lack of any plan ("eine auffällige Planlosigkeit") and the presence of many parallel passages are indications that the book is not the work of one hand. The observation of the characteristics of the different superscriptions provide some insight in to the book's composition (*Zur Komposition*, 5-6).

A final example is provided by Carroll. He also identifies certain features of the world of the text to support his interpretive approach to the book: the differences in language between prose and poetry, different attitudes in the book towards Judah and Jerusalem, the near absence in chap. 1-25 of markers which identify Jeremiah as the speaker and the abundance of these in chaps. 26-52, the presence of parallel passages (*Jeremiah*, 35-37).

[48] For more on this, see below, 48-54.

the exiles had no way of resisting Babylonian power. Such an approach has led to the neglect of the fuller significance of 29:4-7 MT, whose extraordinary language signals an extraordinary understanding of the figure of Babylon.[49]

Third, the Babylonian king is designated in 25:9 MT and 27:6 MT, a speech of Yhwh, as עבדי ("my servant"). In 51:34 he is referred to as תנין ("a sea monster"), a figure opposed to Yhwh. While the contradiction can be easily resolved by assigning 25:9 and 27:6 to one source or level of the tradition and 51:34 to another, such an approach can close off other interpretive possibilities which a fuller exploration of the world of text would offer.[50]

In its synchronic approach to the text the present study takes seriously the final form of the MT. It gives neither it nor the LXX any priority, but regards them both as literary works in their own right. On this point the approach of the present study differs from that of McKane and, to a lesser extent, from those of Carroll and Rudolph. McKane's interest is the history of the Hebrew text of the book. For him the LXX is based on a Hebrew text which is shorter than the present MT.[51] On the basis of comparisons between the two textual traditions he reconstructs the shorter Hebrew *Vorlage*, making judgments in particular cases as to whether the LXX or the MT might represent "the better text" or the "more original".[52] In regard to Carroll and Rudolph, they reflect a bias against the MT in their divisions of the book. Both divide the book into part one (Jer 1:1-25:14), part two (25:15-28; chaps. 46-51), part three (chaps. 26-36), epilogue (52:1-34).[53]

The choice of a synchronic approach does not imply that the historical-critical approach, with its interest in the historical figure of the prophet and the process of the book's composition, is to be rejected either on theoretical or practical grounds.[54] The present study explores interpretive possibilities either neglected

---

[49] See below, 148-156.

[50] On this point, see below, 204-205.

[51] McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:l-li.

[52] For "the better text", McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:xviii; the "more original", *ibid.*, 1:xvii.

[53] Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 86-88; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 1.

[54] In this respect the study follows those of Bozak and Boyle, the latter of which was available to me only at the conclusion of my own research: Barbara A. Bozak, *Life "Anew": A Literary-Theological Study of Jer. 30-31* (AnBib 122; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1991); Brian Boyle, *Fire in the City: A Synchronic (Narrative Critical) and Diachronic Reading of the Interviews between Zedekiah and Jeremiah in Jeremiah 37:1-38:28a* (Roma: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1997).

or excluded because of the dominance of the historical-critical approach in twentieth century Jeremiah research.[55]

The study draws on a number of sources in its approach to the text. For its understanding of the literary dynamics of the text it draws indirectly upon the work of Alter, Berlin, Fishbane, Muilenburg, Polzin, Ska, and Steinberg.[56] It utilises some form-critical terminology in order to classify various texts according to their function. The use of such terminology is purely pragmatic. It is used in the context of an analysis of the final form of the text, and does not indicate any attempt to uncover the oral history of a unit or its *Sitz-im-Leben*.

---

[55] The limitations of the historical-critical approach to the book of Jeremiah have been taken up by Brueggemann in his review of the commentaries of Carroll, Holladay, and McKane (Walter Brueggemann, "Jeremiah: Intense Criticism/ Thin Interpretation," *Int* 42 [1988] 268-280). While Brueggemann is right to say that issues of history have controlled the interpretation of the book (*ibid.*, 271), it is difficult to see how a single commentary on the book can contain an in-depth treatment of the issues that a century of historical critical research has raised, and also address the meaning of the book for today.

In a review of Jeremiah research in which he replies to Brueggemann's criticism, Carroll draws attention to how the different methodologies used by Holladay, McKane and himself generate different understandings of the book ("Radical Clashes," 99-114). Such differences actually contribute to a better understanding of the book: "The great virtue of such differences of approach and reading is that they help to map comprehensively the territory of Jeremiah studies and then enable readers to read Jeremiah following different paths" (*ibid.*, 101).

[56] The above scholars mostly do not provide any extensive treatment of the book of Jeremiah. What the study draws on from them is an approach to the text represented in such work as Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1985); —, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1981); Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (The Bible and Literature Series; Sheffield: Almond, 1983); Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991); James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969) 1-18; Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History. Part Two: 1 Samuel* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989); Jean Louis Ska, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us": Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (Subsidia Biblica 13; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1990); Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

2.2. *Metaphor as a Figure of Speech*

For its understanding of metaphor, the study draws on several insights of Ricoeur.[57] In his work *The Rule of Metaphor*, he gives an initial working definition of metaphor, which can also serve as useful beginning point for present purposes. A metaphor is a figure which gives "an unaccustomed name to some other thing, which thereby is not being given its proper name".[58]

While the working definition might suggest that metaphor consists of the substitution of one term for another, there is for Ricoeur much more to metaphor.[59] It is founded on the perception of resemblance between one term and another which generates new meanings.[60] The giving of an unaccustomed name to something creates a necessary tension within the metaphorical relationship, the effect of which is to produce a new meaning.

Metaphorical meaning them emerges from the suspension of literal reference. In the sentence "the man is a tiger", the word "tiger" cannot literally refer to "the man". It is when the literal reference of the sentence is suspended, so making it ambiguous that another level of meaning can emerge. The suspension of literal reference is the necessary condition for the emergence of metaphor.[61] A metaphorical statement then has two levels of ref-

---

[57] Much of his thought on metaphor can be found in Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (London: Routledge 1994 [originally published 1978]); also his *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976).

[58] Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 65.

[59] Ricoeur addresses and rejects the view of metaphor that metaphor consists only of the substitution of one word for another in *The Rule of Metaphor*, 100-133.

[60] In the much-quoted words of Ricoeur, metaphor is an example of "semantic innovation" (*Interpretation Theory*, 52).

[61] Ricoeur calls the suspension of literal reference "the negative condition" for the emergence of metaphor (Paul Ricoeur, "Words, Polysemy, Metaphor," *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination* [ed. Mario J. Valdés; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991] 84). For further on the topic, see e.g., his *Interpretation Theory*, 68; "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality," *A Ricoeur Reader*, 124; *The Rule of Metaphor*, 221. See also, Mara E. Donaldson, *Holy Places Are Dark Places: C. S. Lewis and Paul Ricoeur on Narrative Transformation* (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1988) 46; Mario J. Valdés, "Introduction: Paul Ricoeur's Post-Structuralist Hermeneutics," *A Ricoeur Reader*, 13; Erin White, "Between Suspicion and Hope: Paul Ricoeur's Vital Hermeneutic," *Journal of Literature and Theology* 5 (1991) 312-313.

erence. There is the literal, which is suspended or eclipsed, and the metaphorical, which emerges from the suspension or eclipse of the literal. The phenomenon is referred to by Riceour as "split reference".[62]

Within the metaphorical statement there is a tension centred in its predicate between identity and difference. "The man is a tiger" is a metaphorical statement. At the literal level the statement is absurd: the man *is not* a tiger. The relationship between "man" and "tiger" is one of difference. It is at the metaphorical level that the statement makes sense: the man *is* a tiger. The relationship is one of identity, and it generates an insight into the character of the man. For Ricoeur, metaphor "transforms a self-contradictory statement into a significant self-contradiction".[63] The tension between identity and difference is central to metaphor.[64]

Metaphor however is not confined to the level of the sentence, but exists within texts and between texts. The tension characteristic of metaphor, between identity and difference, exists not just between two terms in a sentence, but also between two terms in a text. This understanding of metaphor is founded on the idea that a text is more than a collection of sentences. Rather, it is composed according to conventions of genre and language and constitutes a whole. Within a text metaphor emerges not only at the level of the sentence but at the level of the work as well. Metaphors can exist as a "local event in the text" and are interpreted within the broader context of the text.[65] At the same time the interpretation of the text as a whole "is controlled by the expla-

---

[62] Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 229. For further on this, see also *ibid.*, 229-230; *Interpretation Theory*, 36-37. The term is explained in various works on Ricoeur: e.g., Donaldson, *Holy Places*, 45; Robert Sweeney, "A Survey of Recent Ricoeur-Literature," *Philosophy Today* 29 (1985) 40-41; Gilbert Vincent, "Paul Ricoeur's 'Living Metaphor'," *Philosophy Today* 21 (1977) 416-417; Valdés, "Introduction," 13-14.

[63] Ricoeur, "Word, Polysemy, Metaphor," 78.

[64] For further on the role of the tension between identity and difference in Ricoeur's understanding of metaphor, see *The Rule of Metaphor*, 247-256, 298-300; *Interpretation Theory*, 49-53. Helpful explanations are also provided by Donaldson, *Holy Places*, 38-41; Leo G. Perdue, *The Collapse of History: Reconstructing Old Testament Theology* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994) 201-205.

[65] Paul Ricoeur, "Metaphor and the central problem of hermeneutics," *Paul Ricoeur: Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (ed. & trans. John B. Thompson; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 180.

nation of the metaphor as a local phenomenon of the text".[66]

The idea that metaphor generates new meanings is founded on an understanding of a text as something more than a self-enclosed artefact. Just as words and sentences are not simply an closed system of signs but refer to something beyond themselves, so does a written text. It points to something beyond itself, and it projects a world which can be appropriated by a reader.[67] Metaphor and text share the common quality of being able to generate new meaning.

The present study then is one which recognises the capacity of the text to project or configure a world and thereby to redescribe reality. What is of particular interest for the present study is the role of the figure of Babylon in the world projected in Jeremiah MT. It explores how the figure of Babylon functions as a metaphor within Jeremiah MT and how it contributes to the world which Jeremiah MT projects.

2.3. *The Content of the Present Study*

The present study is of the figure of Babylon. By this is meant the textual entity בבל ("Babylon") and any other expressions or figures of speech which are used to represent it. The study explores the meaning of the various expressions used to represent Babylon and the contexts in which they occur. It also investigates the relationships in the text between the figure of Babylon and that of Judah, and between the former and that of Yhwh.

Besides its metaphoric representation, there are also instances in the book in which Babylon is represented metonymically. Metonymy is a figure of speech by which the whole is represented by a part. So, in the expression "to count heads", the word "head" is a metonymy for a person. The aim of the count is not to establish the number of heads present but the number of people. In

---

[66] *Ibid.*, 181.

[67] As Ricoeur explains, in the composition of a text events are given a particular configuration, which allows to them to be followed and have intelligibility. The process of configuration is accompanied by the act of reading, which makes complete "the meaning of the work in the full sense of the work" (Paul Ricoeur, "Narrated Time," *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination* [ed. Mario J. Valdés; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991], 350). The intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader brings about the redescription or refiguration of the world (*ibid.*, 338-339, 350-351).

Jeremiah MT Babylon is often represented by the metonymic fig-
ure of its king.[68]

The study does not engage directly in any discussion of the his-
toricity of the references to Babylon in the book. It will however
refer to certain historical information about the Babylon of the
7th-6th centuries BCE to highlight the difference between the
historical Babylon of that era and the Babylon portrayed in Jere-
miah MT.

The body of the study consists of five chapters in addition to
this introductory chapter and a conclusion.

Chapter two begins the study proper. It is an investigation of
Jeremiah 1, and shows that metaphor is an important hermeneu-
tical key for the interpretation of the chapter and hence of the
book. It takes up the interpretation of the book's superscription
(Jer 1:1-3), the figure of the prophet (1:10), and the threat from
the north (1:13-16). Building on Ricoeur's idea that the suspen-
sion or collapse of the literal is the condition for the emergence
of metaphor, it shows that the book's introduction has a meta-
phorical aspect to it, generally overlooked but vital for a synchronic
reading of the text.

The chapter also considers how the book's beginning (1:1-3)
and conclusion (chap. 52) form a frame around its contents, the
effect of which is to create the fiction that the Babylonian exile
is not yet ended. The book begins and ends in exile, and is to be
read from the viewpoint of a community in exile.

The chapter shows that Jeremiah MT has a particular perspec-
tive about the exile, in which the themes of judgment and hope
exist in an unresolved tension with each other. The tension is
expressed both in 52:31-34 at the end of the book, and also in its
the structure, where words of punishment are juxtaposed with
promises about the future. The progression from judgment to
restoration, found in the book of Ezekiel, does not exist in Jere-
miah. While there are promises about an end of the exile, this is
not yet in sight. The exile is unended.

Chapter three takes up the interpretation of the figure of Baby-

---

[68] Thomas McLaughlin, "Figurative Language," *Critical Terms for Literary Study*
(eds. Frank Lentriccia, Thomas McLaughlin; Chicago and London: The Uni-
versity of Chicago Press, 1990) 83-84. See also Hayden White, "Interpretation
in History," *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and Lon-
don: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) 72-73.

lon in chaps. 2-24 MT. It begins with 20:1-6, the first text in which
there is an explicit reference to Babylon. In these verses Babylon
is a place of exile and death, and a metaphor for being landless.
The fate of exile in Babylon signifies the reversal of the covenant
with the patriarchs. Within chaps. 21-24 Babylon appears under
various aspects. In 21:1-10 its king is metaphorically identified with
Yhwh. Both are partners in the attack on Jerusalem. In chaps.
21-24 Nebuchadnezzar is represented as a counter-figure to the
Judean kings. While they (apart from Josiah) are judged either
negatively or ambiguously, he is represented as closely allied with
Yhwh's purposes.

In chap. 24 Babylon is represented as the place from which a
renewed community will emerge to repopulate a Judah devastat-
ed and emptied of its inhabitants. The new entry into the land
by a people from Babylon and not Egypt signifies that the Exo-
dus has been supplanted as Judah's *confessio fidei*.

Within chaps. 2-20 the figure of Babylon also functions as an
organising metaphor for Yhwh's judgment. Within a text there
are metaphors which are more central or fundamental to the struc-
ture of the text, and contribute to its order, shape or form. Such
metaphors are referred to as organising metaphors. Within chaps.
2-20 the diverse and at first sight unconnected metaphors for
Yhwh's judgment are subsumed under the figure of Babylon.

Chapter four of the study takes up the representation of Baby-
lon in Jeremiah 25 MT. The study's synchronic reading brings to
light an important shift in the representation of Babylon in Jere-
miah 25 MT. At the beginning of the chapter (v. 1) it has the
characteristics of a historical figure. Its king is named and a par-
ticular year of his reign is cited. However by v. 26 Babylon ap-
pears as a figure of mystery and is referred to by the cipher שׁשׁך
("Sheshach"). Within Jeremiah 25 MT one can see the develop-
ment from a Babylon which is a figure from history to a Babylon
which shows some of the characteristics of the archetypal enemy
of Yhwh.

The shift in the representation of Babylon is the result of the
disintegration of historical and geographical parameters in the
chapter. The chapter collapses the chronological distance between
the year 605 and the occasion of the destruction of Jerusalem,
which is also made contemporaneous with the time of the reader
by means of the expression היום הזה ("this day" – 25:18 MT). For

the reader of Jeremiah 25 MT the representation of Jerusalem as still in ruins is another expression of the idea that the exile is not yet ended.

Chapter five takes up the unconventional and extraordinary representations of Babylon in Jeremiah 27 MT and 29 MT. In these chapters Babylon is represented as the nation which has a particular relationship with Yhwh. Judah's sacred traditions are employed not to depict its own unique standing and relationship with its God, but rather to represent Babylon in this way. Babylon is metaphorically identified with Judah.

In Jeremiah 27 MT Judah's God, the creator of the world and liberator of the people from captivity in Egypt, gives to Nebuchadrezzar an authority over creation equal to that of the eponymous human ancestor in the garden. The Babylonian king is also the recipient of the patriarchal promise of the gift of land, and as עבדי ("my servant" – 27:6) has a standing equal to that of the greatest of Judah's rulers.

In Jeremiah 29 MT the metaphorical identification of Babylon with Judah is also found. In this chapter Babylon is represented as a place. In 29:4-7 life in Babylon is placed on a par with that in Judah. The Deuteronomistic promises associated with life in the land can be realised in Babylon, as can the patriarchal promise of progeny and permanent settlement in the land. Yhwh is also accessible to the community in worship, and Babylon displaces Jerusalem as the city of שלום ("welfare, peace").

Besides the representation of Babylon as metaphorically identified with Judah, Babylon is also presented in chaps. 27 and 29 MT as the figure whose identity is quite distinct from that of Judah. In Jeremiah 27 MT it is also a place of punishment from which the people will one day return. In Jeremiah 29 MT it is not only the place of exile for those deported by Nebuchadrezzar after 597; it also represents the places in which the people have been scattered in the diaspora.

Chapter six takes up the figure of Babylon in Jeremiah 50-51 MT. At first sight Babylon is represented in these chapters according to the most conventional view. It is the enemy of Yhwh, the oppressor of Judah, who is now to be punished for its pride and arrogance.

However another line of thought can be discerned in chaps. 50-51 MT. It depicts Babylon as a figure which is metaphorically

identified with Judah, thereby undermining the view of Babylon as the alien other. Both Judah and Babylon are represented as having sinned against Yhwh. What is particularly striking here is not the designation of Judah's sinfulness *per se*, but the context in which the designation occurs. In the oracles which proclaim punishment on Babylon for what it has done, there can also be seen the grounds for Judah's own punishment—viz., its sin. Even in the most anti-Babylon part of the book, Babylon is not portrayed unambiguously as the alien other. This is a distinctive characteristic of the book of Jeremiah, as the comparison with the uniformly negative representation of Babylon in Isaiah 13-14 and 46-47 shows.

Chapter seven concludes the study. It draws together the particular insights that the present study's synchronic reading and emphasis on metaphor have generated, and summarises the various representations of Babylon in the book. In its very last section it situates within the post-exilic world the final form of Jeremiah MT with its representation of an unended exile, and its understanding of a Babylonian dominance that still continues.

JEREMIAH 1 AND THE EMERGENCE OF METAPHOR

Jeremiah 1 is of particular importance for the present study and its interest in the figure of Babylon. As an introduction to the book, Jeremiah 1 contains a hermeneutical key which is central for this study's interpretation of the figure of Babylon. The key is metaphor, and the presence of metaphor in the book's introduction points to the importance of metaphor for an understanding of the whole book. An interpretation of Babylon as a metaphor is therefore not something idiosyncratic or ill-founded, but is consistent with the metaphorical dimension of the whole book.

The metaphorical is a significant but neglected aspect of the interpretation of three important elements of Jeremiah 1: its superscription, its portrayal of the figure of the prophet, and its representation of the threat from the north. The metaphorical aspect of these three key concepts foreshadows how they are portrayed in the book itself.

The first part of the analysis of Jeremiah 1 is to establish the divisions within the chapter. On the basis of these divisions the interpretation of the chapter will begin with the superscription (vv. 1-3). A metaphorical interpretation of these verses provides critical information for an understanding of Babylon in the book. The study of the superscription is followed by that of the figure of the prophet in v. 10, and the threat from the north in vv. 13-16. The study of each of these supports the metaphorical interpretation of the superscription by showing that the metaphorical dimension of the text is not restricted to just vv. 1-3. A short summary concludes this chapter of the study.

1. *Division of Jeremiah 1*

As is generally agreed, the first unit in the chapter is the book's superscription (vv. 1-3). In regard to the rest of the chapter, the presence of the formula ויהי דבר־יהוה אלי ("The word of the LORD came to me") in vv. 4, 11, 13 provides an important clue for identify-

ing the divisions of the rest of the chapter. It divides into three sections: vv. 4-10, 11-12, 13-19. Each has the following structure: ויהי דבר־יהיה אלי (vv. 4, 11, 13) followed by ואמר ("and I said" – vv. 6, 11, 13) and ויאמר יהוה אלי ("and the LORD said to me" – vv. 7, 12, 14). Each of the longer sections, vv. 4-10 and 13-19, are of approximately equal length and are connected by the themes of the prophet's mission and authority.[1]

The links between the two passages are seen particularly in vv. 7-10 and 17-19. Both passages use צוה ("to command") with דבר ("to speak" – vv. 7b, 17a). V. 8 has כי־אתך אני להצילך ("For I am with you to deliver you"), while v. 19 has כי־אתך אני נאם־יהוה להצילך ("For I am with you, says the LORD, to deliver you"). There is also the parallel pairing אל־תירא מפניהם ("Do not be afraid of them" – v. 8) and אל־תחת מפניהם ("Do not break down before them" – v. 17).[2]

Vv. 13-19 form a separate unit from vv. 11-12, as the following differences between them indicate.[3] The expression היטבת לראות ("You have seen well" – v. 12) is missing from vv. 13-19. The response of Jeremiah to Yhwh is also structured differently. In v. 11 the reply is מקל שקד אני ראה ("A branch of an almond tree I see"), whereas the reply in v. 13 is longer. אני ראה ("I see") is followed by further elaboration of the vision: סיר נפוח אני ראה ופניו מפני צפונה ("a boiling pot, tilted away from the north").[4]

In the light of these links between vv. 4-10 and 13-19, it can be seen that vv. 11-12 stand as a hinge between the two parallel sec-

---

[1] B. Renaud, "Jer 1: Structure et théologie de la rédaction," *Le Livre de Jérémie: le prophète et son milieu, les oracles et leur transmission* (BETL 54; ed. P.-M. Bogaert; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1980) 180-181, 187.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] The differences between vv. 11-12 and vv. 13-19 are not taken into account in the commonly proposed division of the chapter into vv. 4-10 (the call of the prophet), vv. 11-16 (two visions and their explanations), and vv. 17-19 (words of assurance to the prophet). This approach uses the presence of different literary forms as the criterion for identifying the chapter's units. Furthermore, unlike Renaud's analysis, it does not take sufficient account of the structural features of the text.

For this division (with some differences) see e.g., Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 94-111; Herrmann, *Jeremia* 43; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 4-13; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:6-25; Harry P. Nasuti, "A Prophet to the Nations: Diachronic and Synchronic Readings of Jeremiah 1," *HAR* 10 (1986) 249-286; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 4-13; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 144.

[4] I have departed here from the NRSV's translation of v. 11 which does not reflect the Hebrew word order.

tions of the text.[5] These verses emphasise the inevitable fulfill-
ment of the divine word: שֹׁקֵד אֲנִי עַל־דְּבָרִי לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ ("I am watching
over my word to perform it"). A fundamental theme of the book
is foreshadowed here. The word of Yhwh, whether one of judg-
ment or restoration, will come to pass.[6] Any nation, whether it
be all-conquering Babylon or the subjugated Judah, is always un-
der the control of Yhwh.

The following analysis of Jeremiah 1 proceeds on the basis of
the divisions of the chapter which have been established above.

2. *The Superscription (1:1-3)*

For the present study and its interest in the figure of Babylon,
the most important element of Jeremiah 1 is its superscription.
An exploration of its metaphorical significance leads to an ap-
preciation of the exile and hence of the figure of Babylon that is
peculiar to the book of Jeremiah. According to this view the exile
is not yet ended and Babylon still reigns supreme.

The superscription of a prophetic book is of particular signifi-
cance for its interpretation. Superscriptions also reveal historical
and theological interests. They came into existence as part of the
process by which a prophet's message was preserved and made
accessible to later generations. The superscription of a prophet-
ic book identifies the contents of the book as the revelation of
Yhwh, and claims for the written prophetic message the same
privileged status as was given the prophet's oral proclamation. The
composition of the superscription therefore implies an act of in-
terpretation.[7]

---

[5] The word used by Renaud is "*charnière*" (Structure et théologie," 187).

[6] For vv. 11-12 as foreshadowing a fundamental theme in the book, see Renaud,
"Structure et théologie," 190-191. After his analysis of the chapter's structure,
which establishes the function of vv. 11-12 as a hinge, Renaud then suggests a
possible historical context in which the theme of the realisation of Yhwh's word
would have been especially significant. However it is on literary, not historical
grounds, that the present study recognises the centrality of vv. 11-12 and the
theme of the realisation of Yhwh's judgment.

[7] For the function and importance of the superscriptions of the prophetic
books see Gene M. Tucker, "Prophetic Superscriptions and the Growth of a
Canon," *Canon and Authority* (eds. George W. Coats, Burke O. Long; Philadel-
phia: Fortress, 1977) 56-70. The importance of superscriptions in the interpre-
tation of biblical books is also recognised by Peckham, whose approach to the

An analysis of the superscription then will provide important hermeneutical clues for interpreting a given book. In the case of the book of Jeremiah such an analysis will establish that Jer 1:1-3 has a metaphoric dimension to it. The analysis will be carried out in two stages. The first provides a metaphorical interpretation of Jer 1:1-3. The second addresses the necessary condition for the emergence of metaphor, i.e., the suspense or collapse of literal reference in regard to the superscription.

2. *The Superscription as Metaphor*

In this section the metaphorical interpretation of Jer 1:1-3 will be put forward. It will be followed by an analysis of the superscriptions of two other prophetic books, Isa 1:1 and Amos 1:1, the aim of which is to show that the metaphoric aspect in a superscription is also found in other prophetic books, and is not limited just to the book of Jeremiah. Such a comparison is necessary because a metaphoric interpretation of Jer 1:1-3 is not common and could be dismissed as simply idiosyncratic.

2.1.1. *Metaphor in Jer 1:1-3*

The metaphorical aspect of 1:1-3 can be seen particularly in two elements of the superscription, its title and its chronological information. The structure of Jer 1:1-3 follows a pattern similar to the superscriptions of other prophetic books. It has a title – ‏מי-‏ ‏דברי יר‎ ("The words of Jeremiah" – v. 1aα), followed by an elaboration.[8] The first element in the elaboration is the identification of the prophet – . . . ‏בן־חלקיהו‎ ("son of Hilkiah..." – v. 1aβ,b). The second element is the identification of Jeremiah as the recipient of the prophetic word – ‏אשר היה דרב־יהוה אליו‎ ("to whom the word of the LORD came" – v. 2aα). The third element is chronological information, which situates his ministry between the years 627 and 587 (vv. 2aβ-3). For the purposes of the present study

---

formation of prophetic books is very different to that of Tucker (Brian Peckham, *History and Prophecy: The Development of Late Judean Literary Traditions* [New York: Doubleday, 1993]). He calls 1:1-3 "a docket", which when read with the rest of Jeremiah 1 suggests how the book is to be interpreted (*ibid.*, 307).

[8] For the structure of the superscription, see Tucker, "Prophetic Superscriptions," 59-61.

the title and the chronological information are of particular significance.

The metaphorical aspect of Jer 1:1-3 is apparent in the very first words of the superscription's title, דברי ירמיהו. This expression can only have a metaphorical significance. One of the few points of agreement in twentieth century Jeremiah research is that the book contains material which does not originate from the prophet himself.[9] The figure of the prophet becomes a unifying factor, whereby material from quite different sources and levels of the tradition is attributed to him. Carroll, for example, describes Jeremiah as a "narrative figure" which "gives a specificity to the poetry and this is imposed on the poems from the redaction".[10] Although using a very different approach to the book, Carroll articulates an understanding of the figure of Jeremiah which is close to what is being proposed here.

In the light of twentieth century Jeremiah research it may seem self-evident that דברי ירמיהו can only have a metaphorical meaning. After all, no modern interpreter would identify the contents of the book as literally the words of Jeremiah. However, because the study of the superscription has been dominated by source-critical and redactional issues, the significance of the self-evident has not been recognised. It is surely of great significance for an understanding of the present text of the book that its very first words have a metaphorical significance.

A metaphorical aspect can also be seen in the superscription's chronological information:

to whom the word of the LORD	אשר היה דבר־יהוה
came in the days of King	אליו בימי יאשיהו בן־אמון
Josiah son of Amon of Judah,	מלך־יהודה
in the thirteenth year of his	בשלש־עשרה שנה

---

[9] The presence of non-Jeremian material is obviously central to the views of scholars who believe the book contains little that can be attributed to the prophet himself: e.g., Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 35-37; Duhm, *Jeremia*, xii-xx. This view is also central to those who maintain that the book has undergone a Deuteronomistic redaction: e.g., Hyatt, "Jeremiah," 787-790; Thiel *Jeremia 1-25*, 32-45. The view is also shared by those who believe that significant sections of the book and their arrangement are the work of the prophet: e.g., Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 24. The presence of non-Jeremian material is also accepted by scholars who represent an intermediate position: e.g., McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:xli-liii; Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition*, 17-45; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, xiv-xix; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 34-35.

[10] Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 57-58. This view is also found in his essay "Dismantling the Book of Jeremiah," 291-292.

reign.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　 למלכו :
It came also in the days of　　　　　　　　　　　 ויהי בימי
King Jehoiakim son of Josiah　　　　　　 יהויקים בן־יאשיהו
of Judah,　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　 מלך יהודה
and until the end　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　 עד־תם
of the eleventh year　　　　　　　　　　　 עשתי עשרה שנה
of King Zedekiah son of Josiah　　　　　　　　　　 לצדקיהו
of Judah,　　　　　　　　　　　　 בן־יאשיהו מלך יהודה
until the captivity of　　　　　　　　　　 עד־גלות ירושלם
Jerusalem　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　 בחדש החמישי :
in the fifth month.
(1:2aβ-3)

While the analysis of the title is straightforward, that of the chro-
nological information is more complex. The first part of the analysis
of the chronological information concentrates on the metaphor-
ical significance of the year 587. The second part takes up the
relationship of tension between the ideas of judgment and hope,
both of which are associated with 587. This is a perspective pecu-
liar to the book of Jeremiah, as a comparison with the books of
Isaiah and Ezekiel shows. The final part of the analysis of the
superscription is about the representation of Jeremiah's ministry
as covering a forty year period.

The year 587 also has a particular significance. According to
the superscription it marks the conclusion of Jeremiah's prophetic
ministry. It is also the year of the גלות ירושלם ("the captivity of
Jerusalem" – v. 3). While this expression may at one level simply
refer to the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, it has an-
other level of significance, as the book's conclusion indicates.[11]
Jeremiah 52 narrates the fall of Jerusalem and its aftermath. It
focuses firstly on the events of 587 (vv. 1-30) and then concludes
with the report of Jehoiachin's release in Babylon by Evil-merodach
in 560. Both the superscription and conclusion of the book share
an important common feature: they both refer to the events of
587. Where 1:1-3 moves from the time of Josiah through to the
year 587, chap. 52 resumes the events of 587 and moves through
to the year 560, when the community is still in exile. The book is
thus contained in an "exilic envelope".[12] It begins and ends in
exile, an exile which still continues.

---

[11] As is recognised by Walter Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up, To Tear Down: A
Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah 1-25* (International Theological Commentary;
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 21.

[12] The framing effect of 1:1-3 and chap. 52 is noted by Rosenberg, "Jere-

An important implication of the book's frame is that the continuing exile cannot be understood from an historical point of view. The book of Jeremiah reached its final form in the post-exilic period, but its shape gives rise to the fiction that the exile has not yet ended.[13]

The year 587 is thus a metaphor, and becomes a lens or filter which focuses the contents of the book and organises our view of it. It is a year with which key theological ideas are associated.[14].

In Jer 21:1-10, which describes the events of 587, the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem is interpreted as Yhwh's siege: ונלחמתי אני אתכם ("I myself will fight against you"). The command to Jeremiah to buy the field at Anathoth (32:1-15) is set in the year 587, as are the accompanying oracles of judgment (vv. 16-35) and restoration (vv. 36-44). The oracles of restoration which follow in chap. 33 are also set in the same year. In chap. 39, which is set at the time of the fall of Jerusalem (v. 1), the year 587 is associated with the fall of Jerusalem (vv. 1-10), but then with the preservation of Jeremiah (vv. 11-14) and with a promise of deliverance to the Babylonian official Ebed-Melech (vv. 15-18). In 52:3 the events of 587 are an expression of Yhwh's anger: כי על־אף

---

miah and Ezekiel," 190-191. He does not however develop its significance.

[13] While the book's composition is generally understood to be the result of a long and complex process which extended into the post-exilic period, the length of the process has been much debated. At one end of the spectrum are those who believe that the book contains material that is predominantly of exilic origin with some post-exilic additions: e.g., Bright, *Jeremiah*, LV-LXXIII; Holladay, *Jeremia 2*, 24; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, XXI. At the other end are those who propose that the book's compositional history extends as far as the second and third centuries BCE: e.g., Duhm, *Jeremia*, XX; Rietzschel, *Urrolle*, 120-122. Amongst those whose views fall in-between are e.g., Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 78-80; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:lxxxviii-xcii; Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition*, 55-57; Rofé, "The Arrangement of the Book of Jeremiah," 394-395; Thiel *Jeremia 1-25*, 11.

The differences between the LXX and MT traditions also points to the fluid nature of the Jeremiah tradition, as the work of scholars such as Tov and Janzen has pointed out: J. Gerald Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah* (HSS 6; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973) 131-132; Emmanuel Tov, "The Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah in the Light of Its Textual History," *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (ed. Jeffrey Tigay; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985) 236-237. However Tov and Janzen's work is not without its critics. For a useful summary of different scholars' positions on the matter, see Johann Cook, "The difference in the order of the books of the Hebrew and Greek versions of Jeremiah—Jeremiah 43 (50): a case study," *Old Testament Essays* 7 (1994) 175-192.

[14] For the background to metaphor as an organising filter or screen, see Riceour, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 87-88.

יהוה היתה בירושלם ויהודה עד־השליכו אותם מעל פניו "Indeed, Jerusa-
lem and Judah so angered the LORD that he expelled them from
his presence"). The year 587 is therefore associated with a com-
plex of events which embraces both judgment and restoration.

The technique of using a particular year as an organising fil-
ter is also found in the book of Ezekiel. In place of 587, the year
597 is used to focus the book. In Ezek 1:2 the deportation of Je-
hoiachin is used to situate what follows: בחמשה לחדש היא השנה
החמישית לגלות המלך יויכין ("On the fifth day of the month [it was
the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin]"). Subsequent ma-
terial in the book is similarly dated using the year 597 as the point
of reference: the setting for the oracles in 8:1 is the sixth year of
Jehoiachin's exile; for 20:1 the seventh year; for 24:1 the ninth
year; for 33:21 the eleventh year; for 40:1 the twenty fifth year.[15]
Where the book of Ezekiel associates 597 with גלות
המלך יויכין ("the exile of King Jehoiachin" – 1:2) and with גלותנו
("our exile"—33:21; 40:1), Jer 1:3 identifies 587 as גלות ירושלים
("the exile of Jerusalem").[16] The two books use two different dates
as organising filters.

Furthermore, the book of Jeremiah has its own particular per-
spective on 587 which gives to the year a metaphorical signifi-
cance. Central to the book's perspective is the tension between
judgment and hope, which can be seen in 52:31-34, the last vers-
es of the book, and in the organisation of larger units of text within
it.

Jer 52:31-34 describe the release of Jehoiachin by Evil-merodach.
It is a passage which contains signs of hope such as the very fact
of the release, Jehoiachin's change of clothes, and his place at
the table of the Babylonian king.[17] However, there are also ele-
ments in the text whose interpretation supports an opposite view.
All that happens to Jehoiachin is done by the Babylonian king:
his release, the giving of an allowance, his place at the king's table.
While Jehoiachin's place may be above that of the other kings,
he is still a captive in exile.

In particular, the use of the expression נתן כסא ("to give/ place

---

[15] The chronological markers in the book of Ezekiel are discussed by Walther
Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 113-114.

[16] For גלות ירושלים the NRSV has "the captivity of Jerusalem".

[17] For this view, see Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration* (OTL; London:
SCM, 1968) 78-81.

a seat/throne") reinforces Jehoiachin's dependent status. It is
Evil-merodach who assigns Jehoiachin his place: ויתן את־כסאו ממעל
לכסא מלכים אשר אתו בבבל ("and gave him a seat above the seats of
the other kings who were with him in Babylon" – 52:32). The ex-
pression נתן כסא, with Yhwh as subject of the verb, is used in the
books of Kings in the context of the successor to the Davidic throne
(1 Kings 1:48; 3:6; 5:19 [NRSV 5:5]; 10:9).

1 Kings 1:48 is part of the account of Solomon's rise to power
(vv. 38-53), an event surrounded by considerable intrigue.[18] When
Solomon is anointed and the succession guaranteed, we are told
of David's prayer of thanksgiving:

Blessed be the LORD, the God	ברוך יהוה
of Israel, who today has	אלהי ישראל
granted one of my offspring to	אשר נתן היום
sit on my throne	ישב על כסאי
(1 Kings 1:48)	

The succession means that the promise of a dynasty (2 Sam 7:11-
16) is now realised.[19] 1 Kings 3:6, which belongs to the account
of Solomon's wisdom (3:4-15), contains similar sentiments. It is
a recognition of God's graciousness, expressed in the succession
of Solomon.[20] Again, 2 Sam 7:11-16, especially v. 15, is in the back-
ground. Likewise 1 Kings 10:9, from the speech by the Queen of
Sheba in praise of Solomon's wisdom, blesses Yhwh for Solomon's
accession to the throne. 1 Kings 5:19 belongs to the narrative about
the building of the temple (5:15-9:9 [NRSV 5:1-9:9]).[21] Again
Solomon's decision to build the temple is represented as the ful-
fillment of the oracle in 2 Sam 7:13.

The contexts of these passages have a common quality. They
come from significant moments in the history of the monarchy:
the crisis of the succession (1:48), the portrayal of Solomon as

---

[18] The structure of the narrative of Solomon's succession is given in detail
by Burke O. Long, *1 Kings – with an Introduction to Historical Literature*, (FOTL 9
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 35-39. The passage's literary development is
discussed by Antony F. Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*, CBQMS 17, (Washing-
ton: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1986) 84 n. 43.

[19] John Gray, *I & II Kings* (OTL; London: SCM, 1970) 96.

[20] 3:4-15 are identified as a unit by both Burke (*1 Kings*, 62) and Gray (*I &
II Kings*, 120).

[21] Following Gray's demarcation of the text, which he calls "The Building
and Dedication of the Temple" (*I & II Kings*, 149). Long identifies 5:9-9:26 as a
unit, to which he gives the broader heading "Solomon's building activities" (*1
Kings*, 58).

favoured by God (3:6), the building of the temple (5:19 [NRSV 5:5]), and the recognition of Solomon on the international scene (10:9).

Here in 52:32, the subject of the verb נתן is Evil-Merodach. In a parody of the divine guarantee to David and Solomon, it is now the Babylonian king who sets in place the Davidic dynasty. The negative connotations of the expression are also found in 1:15, which foretells the siege of Jerusalem by unnamed foreign kings: כי הנני קרא לכל־משפחות ממלכות צפונה נאם־יהוה ובאו ונתנו איש כסאו פתח שערי ירושלם ("For now I am calling all the tribes of the king-doms of the north, says the LORD; and they shall come and all of them shall set their thrones at the entrance of the gates of Jerus-alem"). There is then a cruel irony in the use of נתן כסא in Jer 1:15. At the gates of Jerusalem, the city of the Davidic monarchy, it is the foreign invaders whom Yhwh permits to sit on thrones as conquerors. The dynasty whose existence was divinely guaranteed is now at an end. Therefore, if the release of Jehoiachin is a sign of hope, it is at most indirect, muted and exists in tension with the theme of Yhwh's judgment.[22]

The tension between judgment and hope is also found in the structure of the book of Jeremiah. There are sudden switches from doom to salvation and vice versa. The vision of a return of the earth to the state of primal chaos (4:23-26) is then mitigated by v. 27b: שממה תהיה כל־הארץ וכלה לא אעשה ("the whole land shall be a desolation; yet I will not make a full end"). Similarly in the middle of material about death and expulsion from the land

---

[22] The significance of Jehoiachin's release raises the question as to whether the Deuteronomistic History saw a future for Judah after the events of 587. While arguing that the release of the Davidic descendant Jehoiachin signifies that the covenant with David is still valid, Ackroyd admits that Jehoiachin's release "does not explicitly indicate hope" (*Exile and Restoration*, 79). Both he and von Rad (Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, [London, SCM, 1975] 1:342-343) re-ject Noth's original thesis that according to the Deuteronomistic History, "the order of things put forward had reached a final end" and that Jehoiachin's re-lease does not signal a future restoration (Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic His-tory*, [JSOTSup 15; Sheffield: JSOT, 1981] 98). In his interpretation of Jehoi-achin's release, von Rad is supported by Wolff (Hans Walter Wolff, "The Kerygma of the Deuteronomistic Historical Work" in *The Vitality of the Old Testament Tra-ditions*, [eds. Walter Brueggemann and Hans Walter Wolff; Atlanta: John Knox, 1975] 86). Unlike Noth, Wolff does see in the history a hope for the future, which is expressed not in the symbolism of Jehoiachin's release but in the calls to repentance found in various parts of the history (*ibid.*, 90-100).

(chaps. 16–17) there is an *ex abrupto* appearance of a promise of a new Exodus (16:14-15).

This happens also at the macro level in the book, where large blocks of salvation material are circumscribed by promises of judgment. Chaps. 29–33 consist nearly exclusively of promises of restoration and return to the land. However they are embedded in a section of the book (chaps. 26–36) the conclusion of which is about the inevitability of divine judgment (36:27-31). Near the end of the book in its Hebrew form, the oracles against the nations (chaps. 46–51) are immediately followed by another narrative of Jerusalem's fall in 587.[23]

By way of contrast we can note the structure of the book of Ezekiel. It begins with proclamations of judgment (chaps 1–24), followed by the oracles against the nations (chaps 25–32) and promises of salvation and restoration (chaps 33–48). Instead of a juxtaposition of salvation and judgment material, we have here a smoother progression from judgment to an implied salvation for Judah (represented by the oracles against the nations) and then explicit promises of restoration and return to the land. The conclusion of the book of Ezekiel is also quite different. In place of the juxtaposition of the oracles against the nations and the narrative about the events of 587, we find a long and sustained description of the future glory of Jerusalem and the new temple (chaps. 40–48).

The book's concluding verse summarises the vision of a renewed Jerusalem and temple: וְשֵׁם־הָעִיר מִיּוֹם יְהוָה שָׁמָּה ("And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD is There" – 48:35).[24] The superscription of chaps. 40–48 situates the vision in the year 573, the twenty fifth year of Ezekiel's exile. The world of the text then portrays this extraordinary vision of the future as communicated in the depths of exile. Although the community is still in exile, a shining future awaits it.

Where the final form of books such as Isaiah and Ezekiel reflects a redactional process in which proclamations of judgment

---

[23] I use the expression "another narrative", because we have an earlier account of the city's fall in chaps. 37–40.

[24] Ezekiel 40–48 consists of a vision of a restored temple (chaps. 40–42) to which the glory of Yhwh will return (43:1-5), a re-affirmation of regulations for proper worship (43:6–47:12), and a new allocation of land to the twelve tribes (47:13–48:35).

are followed by announcements of salvation, the book of Jeremiah does not reflect this.[25] In the latter the promises of restoration are more circumscribed, and the juxtaposition of judgment and salvation creates a tension in the text about what the future will bring. In comparison to the book of Ezekiel, it could be said that for the book of Jeremiah there is light on the horizon, but it is viewed from a point further down the dark valley of exile than in the book of Ezekiel.

The arrangement of the book of Isaiah differs again. While it contains promises of restoration throughout, these are scarce in the early chapters of the book of Jeremiah. The conclusions of the two books are also quite different to each other in both setting and content. Isaiah 66 addresses the conflicts within the post-exilic community, and so takes us past not only the release of Jehoiachin but the end of the exile itself.[26] Vv. 1-16 juxtapose words of salvation for those whose viewpoint chaps. 56–66 represent, and judgment for their opponents. In vv. 18-24 the focus is firstly on those in diaspora. There is the promise of a return to the land for those in diaspora (vv. 18-21), and the formation of a new community (vv. 22-23). Although the chapter concludes with

---

[25] As Clements writes, "Distinctive patterns have been imposed upon the prophetic collections of the canon so that warnings of doom and disaster are always followed by promises of hope and restoration" (Ronald E. Clements, "Patterns in the Prophetic Canon," *Canon and Authority* [eds. G. W. Coats and B. O. Long; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977] 49).

[26] Neither the nature of the conflicts nor the identity of the conflicting groups are agreed upon by critics. For Muilenburg any certainty of identification is impossible (James Muilenburg, "The Book of Isaiah 40–66: Exegesis," *IB*, 5:758). Westermann calls one group "the devout" (Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* OTL [London: SCM, 1969] 302). It is their viewpoint which is represented in Isaiah 56–66. Their unnamed opponents are portrayed as guilty of various social and cultic abuses (*ibid.*, 301-304).

On the other hand, Hanson makes a quite specific identification. He sees Isaiah 56–66 as reflecting the conflict between two groups who had radically differing visions of the restoration. One supported the rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of the Zadokite priesthood. Their point of view is represented in texts such as Ezekiel 40–48 and the book of Haggai. The other group are followers of Second-Isaiah whose vision was of a more egalitarian, less cult-centred community. Their viewpoint is represented in Isaiah 56–66 (Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979] 71-75). His interpretation has been challenged by Schramm, who identifies the conflict as between the survivors of the exile in Babylon and a syncretistic group within the post-exilic community (Brooks Schramm, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah: Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration* [JSOTSup 193; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995] 175-182).

a threat against unnamed opponents, its clear affirmation of a future gives the book of Isaiah a conclusion quite different from that of Jeremiah. The questions at issue in Isaiah 66 are not about the possibility of a future, but rather about a present which seems to fall short of what was promised. As the analysis of Jer 52:31-34 above shows, the question for Judah is "Do we actually have a future?"

The perspective of the book of Jeremiah about the exile, containing the tension between judgment and restoration, is distinctive. The year 587 functions as a metaphor around which are collected different views about the siege and fall of Jerusalem and its aftermath.

According to vv. 2-3, the book's contents cover the prophet's ministry from the year 627 to 587, a forty year period. The number forty is used in a non-literal sense in a variety of OT temporal expressions.[27] It is the age at which Isaac and Esau married (Gen 25:20; 26:34); the length of the people's wanderings in the wilderness (Exod 16:35; Num 14:33, 34; 32:13; Deut 2:7; 8:2, 4; 29:5; Josh 5:6; Neh 9:21); the age of Caleb when was sent as a spy into the land of Canaan (Josh 14:7, 10); the duration of the rest enjoyed by the land under the judges (Judg 3:11; 5:31; 8:28); the duration of the people's oppression by the Philistines (Judg 13:1); the length of time Eli was a judge (1 Sam 4:18); the age at which Ishbaal succeeded Saul (2 Sam 2:10); the length of the reigns of David and Solomon (2 Sam 5:4; 1 Kings 2:11; 11:42; 1 Chron 29:27; 2 Chron 9:30); the length of Judah's punishment (Ezek 4:6); the length of Egypt's exile and desolation (Ezek 29:11-13).[28] While it

---

[27] The non-literal meaning of the forty year period in Jer 1:1-3 is noted by Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 90.

[28] In Deut 2:7 forty years signifies "a traditional period of time, the space of a generation" (A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, [NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981] 136). For a similar understanding of the forty years in Judg 3:11, see Barnabas Lindars, *Judges 1-5: A New Translation and Commentary* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995) 134-135; also J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges* (OTL; London: SCM, 1981) 9-10.

The forty years for Eli's rule as judge (1 Sam 4:18) is described by Hertzberg as "a round number and a usual one for the East" (H. W. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel* [OTL; London: SCM, 1964] 49). The LXX however fixes the rule of Eli as εἴκοσι ἔτη ("twenty years"), and there is a similar discrepancy between the reading of the MT and the LXX in 2 Sam 15:7. According to the Lucian recension of the LXX, the period of time during which Absalom waited before his rebellion against David was four years: ἀπὸ τέλους τέσσερα ἐτῶν. From the viewpoint of historical accuracy, as Gordon has noted, this reading is to be preferred

is literally true that forty years elapsed between the years 627 and 587, the phrase also has a metaphorical meaning and signifies the completion of a particular period or phase.

The metaphorical interpretation of Jer 1:1-3, which has been proposed above, is founded on two points. The first is the significance of the expression דברי ירמיהו ("the words of Jeremiah" – v. 1). Modern scholarship has shown that they cannot literally refer to the contents of the book. They can only be a metaphor. Such a statement may appear self-evident, but its significance for a reading of the final form of the text has not been fully recognised.

The second point is the function of the chronological information in vv. 2-3. According to v. 3 Jeremiah's prophetic ministry finishes in the year 587, a year of particular significance for Judah. Where the superscription concludes with a reference to the fall of Jerusalem, the book's conclusion begins with the narration of these events and concludes with the account of Jehoiachin's release by the Babylonian king. References to the events of 587 frame the contents of the book. The book begins and ends in exile. The year 587 is a metaphor, acting as a lens or filter which focuses the contents of the book and organises our view of it. It is a year with which key theological ideas are associated.

In particular the year 587 is a point of focus for the contrasting themes of judgment and hope which are both associated with the year 587. A characteristic of the book is the tension between the two themes. Passages of judgment and destruction are juxtaposed with those which refer a future and a hope for Judah.

The use of 587 as a point of focus for its contents is peculiar to the book of Jeremiah. In the book of Ezekiel it is the year 597 which is the point of focus for its contents. The structure of the latter also gives it a character different to that of the former. Its

---

(Robert P. Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary* [Exeter: Paternoster, 1986] 271). The MT's reading is judged to be erroneous by Hertzberg also (*I & II Samuel*, 337, n. *a*). However the MT's reading, ארבעים שנים ("forty years"), has a literary function, providing one of the links between the demise of Eli (2 Samuel 4) and the rebellion of Absalom (chap. 15). For this, see Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, 60-62.

For the view that forty years is used as a round number for the reigns of David (1 Kings 2:11) and Solomon (1 Kings 11:42), see Gray, *I & II Kings*, 55.

For the view that forty years is used as a round number of the length of time during which both Judah will be punished (Ezek 4:6) and Egypt exiled (29:11-13), see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 166-167; *Ezekiel 2*, 113-114.

clear movement from judgment to hope and restoration is not found in the book of Jeremiah.

The issue of the future is also presented differently in the book of Isaiah. While many of its earlier chapters are about the judgment and punishment of Judah, chaps. 40–55 are almost exclusively about the vision of a wonderful restoration of the community in the land of Judah. While chaps. 56–66, and especially the book's concluding chapter, juxtapose the themes of judgment and hope, the setting is different. Isaiah 56–66 addresses issues within the post-exilic community, thereby taking us beyond the exile and the release of Jehoiachin, the events which conclude the book of Jeremiah.

Finally, the representation of Jeremiah's ministry as embracing a period of forty years further adds to the metaphorical aspect of the superscription.

2.1.2. *The Collapse of the Literal in Jer 1:1-3*

Because metaphorical meaning emerges from the collapse of the literal, it is now necessary to show how this occurs in Jer 1:1-3.

The following analysis parallels what has preceded by taking up again and in the same order the elements of the superscription: the expression דברי ירמיהו ("the words of Jeremiah") and the chronological information. The aim now is to show that a literal interpretation of these is not satisfactory in a reading of the present form of the text.

The impossibility of a literal interpretation of דברי ירמיהו has already been addressed above. This is agreed even by scholars whose approaches to the book are radically different.[29] It is just as clear that a literal interpretation of the chronological information in the superscription cannot be sustained.

According to the superscription the chronological parameters of the prophet's ministry are 627 BCE as the beginning and 587 BCE as the end. However the contents of the book do not correspond with these parameters, and there is a section of the book which is about the situation after 587. Chaps. 40–44 contain narratives about the rule of Gedaliah (41:7-16), his assassination in 582 (chap. 42), and the subsequent move to Egypt by a section

---

[29] See, above 24-25.

of the Judean community including Jeremiah (chaps. 42–44). Chap.
52 also describes events after 587, including the release of Jehoi-
achin from prison in 560 (52:31-34).

This discrepancy between the chronological information in the
superscription and that in the book itself has been explained from
a redaction-critical point of view, according to which problems
of chronology are judged to be the product of the book's long
and complicated redaction history. Therefore vv. 1-3 are judged
to be the introduction to the book when it comprised the present
chaps. 1–39.[30] While this conclusion provides an explanation for
the presence of this information in the book, it does not help us
understand its function in the final form of the text. As the text
stands, the chronological information in the superscription can-
not literally refer to the parameters of the prophet's ministry as
described in the book.

2.1.3. *Comparison: Metaphor in Isa 1:1 and Amos 1:1*

The metaphorical is not just found in the superscription to the
book of Jeremiah. The following analysis shows the presence of
the metaphorical in the superscriptions from two other prophet-
ic books. The presence of the metaphorical in Isa 1:1 and Amos
1:1 provides further support for a metaphorical interpretation of
Jer 1:1-3.

We begin with the superscription of the book of Isaiah: חֲזוֹן
יְשַׁעְיָהוּ בֶן־אָמוֹץ אֲשֶׁר חָזָה...בִּימֵי עֻזִיָּהוּ יוֹתָם אָחָז יְחִזְקִיָּהוּ מַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה ("The
vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw...in the days of Uzzi-
ah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" – 1:1).

The chronological information in the superscription suggests
that the book's contents originate in eighth century Judah, whereas
contemporary critical scholarship recognises that most of the book
has its origins in the exilic or post-exilic period. Chaps. 40–55
are usually regarded as coming from the period of the exile, and
some of the material in chaps. 1–39 is regarded as having the same
provenance.[31]

---

[30] As suggested by Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 3. Thiel argues that vv. 1-3 introduce
chaps. 1–25 (*Jeremia 1-25*, 55). Similarly Herrmann sees it as the introduction
to chaps. 1–24, a collection which is concluded by 25:1-14 (*Jeremia*, 26).

[31] An exilic or post-exilic date is assigned not just to chaps. 40-66, but to
large amounts of material in chaps. 1-39. By way of example, see R. E. Clem-

What has happened in the process of the book's composition is that chaps. 40–55 now have a new context. They have been incorporated into the book of Isaiah without any direct reference to their original historical context. Their connection with the exile is established by what precedes in 39:5-8, according to which the eighth century prophet predicts an exile in Babylon at some indefinite time in the future. In their present context in the book, both chaps. 40–55 and 56–66 are part of the message of the eighth century prophet, who proclaimed judgment on Jerusalem and a restoration of fortunes yet to be realised.[32]

In what sense then can the contents of the book be referred to as חזון ישעיהו בן־אמוץ ("The vision of Isaiah son Amoz" – 1:1)? Obviously not literally true, the first words of the superscription can have only a metaphorical meaning. In the context of prophetic literature the word חזון ("vision") refers to the revelation of a word from Yhwh, usually by night and sometimes accompanied by emotional disturbance.[33] However in the book of Isaiah it becomes a more extensive term. It includes the revelation from Yhwh which in Isa 2:1 is designated as דבר ("word") and which in 13:1 is משא ("burden").[34] Because of its place in the superscription, חזון embraces the contents of the whole book, which are then represented as the content of a revelation of Yhwh to Isaiah son of Amoz.[35]

The figure of the prophet becomes a metaphor which holds together in one book blocks of text which originate from different periods in history. It appropriates to the Isaiah tradition the work of anonymous prophets who lived two centuries or so later,

---

ents, *Isaiah 1-39* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 2-3; Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983) 1-10; Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition* (BZAW 171; Berlin/New York, de Gruyter, 1988) 131.

[32] So, Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (London: SCM, 1979), 325-327.

[33] So, Jepsen, "חָזָה," *TDOT* 4:284. He is followed by Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 29.

[34] For חזון as embracing דבר and משא, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 30. For the idea that חזון has a broader meaning that a visual revelation from Yhwh, see Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 29; J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downs Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993) 41; John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* (WBC 24; Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1985) 3; Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 5-6.

[35] For 1:1 as the superscription to the final form of the book (as opposed to the view that 1:1 is the superscription only to Isaiah 1), see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 29.

so that the contents of the book are identified with Yhwh's reve-
lation to the eighth century prophet.[36]

The second superscription for examination is that of the book
of Amos:

The words of Amos,	דברי עמוס
who was among the shepherds of	אשר־היה בנקדים מתקוע
Tekoa, which he saw	אשר חזה
concerning Israel in the days	על־ישראל בימי
of King Uzziah of Judah	עזיה מלך־יהודה
and in the days of King	בימי ירבעם
Jeroboam son of Joash of	בן־יואש
Israel,	מלך ישראל
two years before the	שנתים לפני הרעש :
earthquake.	
(1:1)	

According to the information in 1:1, Amos was an eighth centu-
ry prophet whose ministry was to the northern kingdom. There
is however material in the book that requires a non-literal inter-
pretation of the superscription.

9:11-15 is a promise of restoration which has its origin in Judah
during the exilic or post-exilic period. The discrepancy is also at
the level of the geographic, as well as the temporal. Amos' minis-
try took place in the northern kingdom, whereas 9:11-15 origi-
nated in the south.[37] Again we have an example of the collapse
or suspension of literal reference in the superscription.

The function of 9:11-15 within the book has been explained
by the redaction-critical method. The effect of 9:11-15 is to take
the book and its message beyond the temporal and spatial pa-
rameters indicated in the superscription – i.e., the northern king-
dom in the eighth century. The prophetic proclamation of judg-
ment against the northern kingdom, which had its origins in the
days of the eighth century Amos of Tekoa, is now seen as rele-

---

[36] For 1:1 as the superscription to the whole book, see Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–
12*, 3-6. According to his analysis, the expression חזון ישעיהו בן־אמוץ ("the vision
of Isaiah, son of Amoz") was originally the superscription for an earlier form of
the material in chap. 1, and then used in "an expanded sense" as the super-
scription for the whole book (*ibid.*, 6). What Wildberger calls "an expanded sense"
in his redaction-critical approach to the book is what the literary approach of
the present study calls a metaphoric sense.

[37] For this opinion see, e.g., Childs, *Introduction*, 399; James L.Mays, *Amos*,
(OTL; London: SCM, 1969) 166; Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (Hermeneia;
Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 353.

vant to the southern kingdom and to later generations. As is the case with Isa 1:1, the superscription of the book of Amos also has a dual function. It identifies the chronological parameters of the ministry of an eighth century northern prophet, while at a theological level it sees his message as applicable to, and reinterpreted by the southern kingdom two centuries later.[38]

The function of 9:11-15 is also addressed by Childs in his canonical approach to the text. The incorporation of these verses puts Amos' message of judgment into an eschatological perspective. At some point in the future Israel will be destroyed but then restored. The prophet's message of doom is now placed within the framework of a divinely guaranteed hope for ultimate salvation.[39]

The approaches above, as represented by Wolff and Childs, use either history or theology as the hermeneutical keys to explain how the words of the book are those of Amos. From the point of view of literary analysis, the incorporation of 9:11-15 brings about the collapse of literal reference. These are not literally the words of the eighth century prophet. The expression עמוס דברי does not apply literally to the contents of the book. Rather the words of the book are metaphorically those of Amos. The prophet becomes a unifying figure in the book, holding together material from different levels of the tradition.

The analysis of the metaphorical aspect in Isa 1:1 and Amos 1:1 forms an important support for interpreting the superscription of the book of Jeremiah.

3. The Figure of the Prophet (1:10)

The metaphorical in Jeremiah 1 is not restricted just to vv. 1-3. There is also a metaphorical aspect to the representation of the central human figure of the book – the prophet himself. The presence of metaphor in the representation of the prophet himself indicates how central is this figure of speech in the interpretation of the book.

The first part of what follows presents a metaphorical understanding of the figure of the prophet. The second part establish-

---

[38] So, Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 353-355.

es the grounds for the emergence of metaphorical meaning. It
addresses the collapse of literal reference in 1:10, a verse which
deals with the prophet's mission. What is at issue in this analysis
of the figure of the prophet is not that metaphors are used to
describe the prophet and his mission, but rather that the figure
of the prophet itself is a metaphor.

3.1. *The Figure of the Prophet as Metaphor*

Apart from its other functions within the book, the figure of the
prophet is a metaphor for Yhwh. It is the association of Jeremiah
with activities carried out by Yhwh which gives rise to a relation-
ship of metaphorical identity between the two figures. While at
the literal level Jeremiah is not Yhwh, at the figurative level a re-
lationship of identity emerges.[40]

The first text for attention here is 1:10. What follows then is
an examination of several other texts which establishes that a met-
aphorical understanding of the figure of the prophet is not re-
stricted just to 1:10. The texts in question are 8:18–9:8 (8:18-9:6
NRSV) and 10:19-20. As the analysis will show, the metaphorical
representation of the prophet in 1:10 is oblique, and foreshad-
ows a more developed metaphorical interpretation of the figure
of the prophet in other places in the book.

The metaphorical aspect of the figure of the prophet is fore-
shadowed in 1:10:

See, today I appoint you over	ראה הפקדתיך היום הזה
nations and over kingdoms,	על־הגוים ועל־הממלכות
to pluck up and to pull down,	לנתוש ולנתוץ
to destroy and to overthrow,	ולהאביד ולהרוס
to build and to plant.	לבנות ולנטוע:
(1:10)	

At first sight there is no apparent metaphorical identification
between Yhwh and Jeremiah in v. 10. The metaphorical aspect

---

[39] Childs, *Introduction*, 405-409. He takes issues with the redaction-critical
approach (specifically that of Wolff) because it privileges history in the process
of interpretation. Childs believes that both the threatened punishment of (9:7-10)
and the promised restoration (vv. 11-15) are unrealised, thus rejecting the idea
that 9:8b refers to the experience of the Babylonian exile because "the decisive
force at work in the book's formation is theological in nature.....and does not
depend directly upon external forces of historical change" (*ibid.*, 408).

[40] For the role of identity and difference in metaphor, see above, 14-16.

emerges only in the light of a discrepancy in the use of the verbs נתש ("to pluck up"), נתץ ("to pull down"), אבד *hifil* ("to destroy"), הרס ("to overthrow"), בנה ("to build") and נטע ("to plant").

The implied subject of these infinitives in v. 10 is Jeremiah, yet at no other place in the book is he the subject of these verbs. When any combination of the six verbs occurs elsewhere in the book, their subject is Yhwh.[41] If chap. 1 has the function of introducing the reader to what is to follow, to what does 1:10 direct our attention? It makes no sense to say that it introduces Jeremiah as the prophet who plucks up, pulls down, destroys etc., because in the book these actions are the domain of Yhwh. What 1:10 does point to is the figurative identification of Jeremiah with Yhwh, brought about by attributing to the prophet in 1:10 activities which throughout the book are attributed to the God who sends him. Such an identification is metaphorical.

The representation of the prophet as a metaphor for Yhwh is oblique in 1:10. It can be more clearly seen in 8:18–9:8 (8:18-9:6 NRSV), a text in which the ambiguity about the identity of the speaker leads to the a metaphorical identification of Jeremiah with Yhwh.[42]

Jer 8:18–9:8 (8:18–9:9 NRSV) divides into 8:18–23 (8:18–9:1 NRSV) and 9:1-8 (9:2–9:9 NRSV). 8:18–23 are a unit formed around the themes of lament and grief. What precedes (vv. 16-17) is thematically different (it is about punishment), and concludes with the expression נאם־יהוה ("says the LORD"). It is also held together

---

[41] In 12:14-17 Yhwh is the subject of נתש and אבד *piel* ("to destroy"); in 18:7 of נתש, נתץ and אבד *hifil*; in 18:9 of בנה and נטע; in 24:6 and 42:10 of בנה and נטע, הרס and נתש.

[42] On the metaphorical identification of Jeremiah with Yhwh, see Polk, *The Prophetic Persona*, 58-126.

Ambiguity is important in the present context because it has "a positive and productive use" in the emergence of metaphorical meaning (Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 47; also see his *Rule of Metaphor*, 224). It has a positive hermeneuetical function and leaves open the possibility of new interpretations.

In a separate essay he approaches the function of metaphorical language by contrasting it with "ordinary language" which "aims at communication by cleverly reducing ambiguity" and with "scientific language" which "aims at univocity in argumentation by supressing equivocity" (Ricoeur, "Word, Polysemy, Metaphor," 83).

The positive function of ambiguity is also recognised by Davis in her treatment of the use of metaphor in the book of Ezekiel (Ellen F. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel's Prophecy* [JSOTSup 78; Sheffield: Almond, 1989], 92-95.

by the repetition of the expression בת־עמי ("the daughter of my people") in vv. 19, 22 and 23.[43]

What is at issue in the present discussion is the identity of the speakers in the passage. While the voice in vv. 19b-20 is clearly the people's, that in vv. 18-19a and 21-22 cannot be clearly identified. Some scholars identify Jeremiah as the speaker of vv. 18-19a and 21-22.[44] There is however a difficulty with this conclusion, as their method of argument shows. Because the text itself gives no clear signals about a change of speaker, their conclusion has to be justified by other reasons.

In concluding that the speaker is Jeremiah, Thompson appeals to the role of the prophet as someone who suffers with the people, and cites Amos and Ezekiel as examples.[45] Yet there are no clear signals in the text to support this view. While v. 17 concludes with the expression נאם־יהוה, there is no indication of a shift in speaker in v. 18. Furthermore, the expression בת עמי is found in speeches both by Yhwh and Jeremiah.[46] McKane's judgment that the speaker is Jeremiah causes him problems with v. 19b: מדוע הכעסוני בפסליהם בהבלי נכר ("Why have they provoked me to anger with their images, with their foreign idols?"). Although he admits it is found in the LXX and other versions, he believes that the expression should be omitted because it "is more naturally attributed to Yahweh than to Jeremiah and disturbs the continuity of the prophet's *cri de coeur*".[47] McKane neglects the possibility of an identification by Yhwh with the nation's suffering, an idea clearly expressed in 9:9-10 (9:10-11 NRSV) and vv. 16-18 (vv. 17-19 NRSV).[48]

---

[43] Translated here by the NRSV as "my poor people". On the function of נאם־יהוה here as signalling the conclusion of a unit, see Rolf Rendtorff, "Zum Gebrauch der Formel *ne'um Yahweh* im Jeremiabuch," *ZAW* 66 (1954) 33. For 8:18-23 as a unit, see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 65; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 235; Duhm, *Jeremia*, 92; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:193; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 64-65. While acknowledging the thematic differences between vv. 14-17 and 18-23, Holladay regards the passage as a single unit (*Jeremiah 1*, 288-289).

[44] E.g., McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:193; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 65; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 304. Holladay's position is similar, except that he identifies the people as the voice in v. 19 aβ (*Jeremiah 1*, 288).

[45] Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 304.

[46] In 6:26 the expression is found in a speech of Jeremiah, and in 8:11 and 9:6 in a speech of Yhwh. For this, see Polk, *The Prophetic Persona*, 111.

[47] McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:193.

[48] That Yhwh is not the speaker is argued on different grounds by Holladay. His argument rests on the setting of 8:18-23, which is the same as that of 14:1–

9:9-10 (9:10-11 NRSV) begins with a clear reference to the grief of Yhwh: על־ההרים אשא בכי ונהי ועל־נאות מדבר קינה ("I will take up weeping and wailing for the mountains, and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness"—v. 9 [v. 10]). The LXX has the plural imperative λάβετε ("Take up") for אשא ("I will take up"), although there are no textual difficulties with the MT that would make any change necessary.[49] The change may have been generated by theological concerns about the idea of Yhwh lamenting. However, as 12:7-13 shows, this is not foreign to the book of Jeremiah. The question to be resolved then is the identity of the "I". There is no indication between vv. 8 and 9 of a change in speaker. V. 10 also begins with ונתתי, the *waw*-consecutive, and there is no change of speaker between vv. 9 and 10.[50] For these reasons the voice in v. 9 is to be identified as that of Yhwh.[51]

Another text which expresses the grief of Yhwh is 9:16-17 (9:17-18 NRSV), which is part of the longer unit vv. 16-21 (17-22 NRSV).[52] Vv. 16-17 contain a summons to lament: התבוננו וקראו למקוננות ותבואינה ... ("Consider and call for the mourning women that they

---

15:9, the year 601 (*Jeremiah 1*, 427-429). He interprets the expression עבר קציר כלה קיץ ("the harvest is past, the summer is ended"—8:20) as a literal reference to drought. On the basis of this and the similar diction found in 8:23 and 14:17, he forms his conclusion. In 14:17 the speaker is Jeremiah: therefore he is the speaker in 8:23. He extends this judgment to v. 21 (*ibid.*, 288-289).

Holladay specifically addresses the possibility that, on the basis of 9:9-10, Yhwh may be the speaker. However, because 9:9-10 is set in the year 600 and therefore does not have the same setting as 8:23 and 14:1–15:9, he concludes that Yhwh is not the speaker (*ibid.*, 289, 304).

Holladay's conclusions are based primarily on his approach to the book, in which he assigns the various units in the book to very particular times in the prophet's ministry. In the absence of clear indicators in the text, Holladay appeals to the world behind the text, so that it becomes the controlling factor in dealing with issues which belong to the world of the text. The methodology of the present study is quite different. It explores the meanings that are created within the world of the text. Access to the world behind the text is not rejected, but the primary focus is on the literary dynamics of the world of the text. The discussion here is a clear illustration of how differences in conclusions come about because of different starting points.

[49] The LXX's reading is found in the NRSV. Among critics who also follow it are Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 241; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 67.

[50] As noted by Polk, *The Prophetic Persona*, 118.

[51] As recognised by Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 303; Polk, *The Prophetic Persona*, 117-118. That the speaker is Jeremiah is proposed by Bright, *Jeremiah*, 72; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:203-204.

[52] For these verses as a unit, see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 244; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 310; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:208; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 315.

may come..."). The point at issue again is the identity of the speaker.
Although the unit is introduced by כה אמר יהוה צבאות ("Thus says
the LORD of hosts"), various scholars propose this formula should
be omitted, although there are no text-critical grounds for doing
so. They identify the speaker as Jeremiah, and in this way they
avoid associating with Yhwh any grief or pain over what is hap-
pening to the people.[53]

The idea of Yhwh lamenting over his people is not foreign to
the book of Jeremiah. In the context of the present study, it means
that in a text such as 8:18-23 it is just as possible that the speaker
in vv. 18-19a and 21-22 is Yhwh as it is Jeremiah. The ambiguity
here creates another relationship of identity, this time between
Jeremiah and Yhwh. The grief of the respective figures is the point
of resemblance between them. In this sense Jeremiah is a meta-
phor for Yhwh.

9:1-8 (9:2-9 NRSV) provides another example of ambiguity in
identifying the speaker. It is a prophetic announcement of judg-
ment, consisting of two accusation speeches (vv. 1b-5 and 7) and
the proclamation of judgment (v. 6).[54] Of particular interest is
the speaker of v. 1. Although a new unit begins here, there is no
signal in the text of a shift in speaker. However, by the end of
v. 2 the speaker is clearly Yhwh. At what point do the two voices
of Jeremiah and Yhwh in 8:21-23 become the single voice of Yhwh?
There is no clear point at which this occurs. Again the effect of
this is to blur the lines of division between Yhwh and Jeremiah,
so that a relationship of identity is again set up.[55]

---

[53] Jeremiah is identified as the speaker by McKane, according to whom the
messenger formula in v. 16 is "erroneous" (*Jeremiah*, 1:208). A similar judgment
is made by Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 309. In both cases no reasons are put forward.
That Jeremiah is the speaker is also assumed by Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 312.

[54] So, Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 298. For 9:1-8 as a unit, see J. Berridge, *Prophet,
People and Word of Yahweh: An Examination of Form and Content in the Proclamation
of the Prophet Jeremiah* (Basel Studies of Theology 4; Zürich: EVZ, 1970) 173; Duhm,
Jeremia, 93; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 65. Also, as Rendtorff notes, נאם־יהוה in 9:5 (9:6
NRSV) indicates the mid-point of the unit ("Zum Gebrauch," 29 n. 5). There is
however disagreement about whether 9:1-8 constitutes a unit. Thematic differ-
ences with what follows lead Bright and McKane to regard 9:1-5 as separate from
vv. 6-8 (Bright, *Jeremiah*, 73; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:198). On the basis of the pres-
ence of נאם־יהוה, the connective לכן (v. 6), and the unifying imagery of speech
found in vv. 4-5 and 6-8, 9:1-8 has been regarded as a unit in the above analysis.

[55] A number of critics simply identify Jeremiah as the speaker without at-
tending to the difficulty posed in v. 2 by the expression נאם־יהוה: e.g., Duhm
Jeremia, 93; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 65; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 308-309. Berridge views

Jer 10:19-20 is another text in which a metaphorical represen-
tation can be established. Whereas in 8:18–9:8 (8:18-9:9 NRSV)
there is a metaphorical identification between the prophet and
Yhwh, in 10:19-20 the prophet is represented as a metaphor for
the people.[56] These verses are part of the section vv. 17-25, a pas-
sage in which it is difficult to see a clear structure or pattern.
They differ in theme from what precedes (10:1-16), and in both
theme and style from what follows (11:1-17). 10:17 contains the
feminine singular imperative אִספִי ("gather"). It seems then it is
addressed to the personified city, and the speaker is most likely
Jeremiah.[57] The speaker in v. 18 is clearly Yhwh, but in vv. 19-20
there is ambiguity. There are no explicit signals in the text which
help identify the speaker. The presence of בני ("my children") in
v. 20 could suggest that the people, rather than Jeremiah, are the
speaker.[58] However, because of the similarities of diction between

v. 2 as words communicated earlier to the prophet by Yhwh and which he now
cites (*Prophet*, 175-175).

   McKane takes a more drastic approach in identifying Jeremiah as the speak-
er. The judgment that Yhwh is the speaker is "the consequence of a mistaken
editorial evaluation of the unit" (*Jeremiah*, 1:198). In this instance the LXX does
not support his case. Although it does not have the equivalent of נאם־יהוה at the
end of v. 2, the verse concludes with καὶ ἐμὲ οὐκ ἔγνωσαν ("and they do not
know me"), an expression that hardly refers to Jeremiah. McKane then has to
propose that אתי ("me") is a corruption of את יהוה ("the LORD") to make his
case (*ibid.*).

   Holladay accepts Yhwh as the speaker, and rightly points out the extraordi-
nary imagery employed in the verse. Yhwh is now to be at home in the desert
whereas "he should be at home in Zion" (Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 299). However,
in identifying the voice in 9:1 as that of Yhwh, Holladay has proposed that there
is a change of speaker from that in the preceding verse (8:23). For this there is
no clear signal in the text.

   [56] The idea that a prophet represents the people before Yhwh as an inter-
cessor is widely accepted, and there is clear evidence that this function is part
of the book's understanding of Jeremiah's ministry. In 37:3 Zedekiah asks him
to pray for those under siege in Jerusalem. In 7:14; 11:14 and 14:11-12 he is
forbidden to intercede for the people. This form of representation is a theolog-
ical construct, and as such is different to the literary form of representation
outlined above.

   [57] So, Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 338, 341. Others agree with Holladay about the
addressee of the text, but are silent about the identity of the speaker: e.g., Car-
roll, *Jeremiah*, 260; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:229; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 334. Rudolph
identifies the speaker as Jeremiah, but does not specifically address who the ref-
erent of אספי is (*Jeremia*, 75).

   [58] As suggested by Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 75. For this view, see also Holladay, *Jer-
emiah 1*, 342.

v. 19 and 4:19, words spoken by Jeremiah, the speaker could equally
be the prophet.[59]

What Carroll and Holladay exclude, for different reasons, is
the possibility that in this context ambiguity can have a positive
hermeneutical function.[60] Their conclusions ignore a fundamen-
tal characteristic of a written text—its capacity to have more than
one meaning, and therefore to be metaphorical. The speaker could
be Jeremiah, or it could be the people. The absence of any clear
signals in the text leaves an ambiguity, the exploration of which
opens up a new interpretive possibility.

What is proposed above is an understanding of metaphor as
central to the representation of the prophet in the book. To speak
of the figure of the prophet as metaphor is something quite dif-
ferent to saying that metaphors are used in the book to describe
the prophet. This difference is clarified by looking at 1:17-19:
ואני הנה נתתיך היום לעיר מבצר ולעמוד ברזל ולחמות נחשת ("And I for
my part have made you today a fortified city, an iron pillar, and
a bronze wall" – v. 18). Here several individual metaphors (city,
pillar, wall) are used to describe Jeremiah. This is not what is meant
by the title "the figure of the prophet as metaphor". The title refers
to a feature of the book which is more critical for its interpreta-
tion than the phenomenon of individual metaphors being used
to describe the prophet. What is argued here is that *the figure of
the prophet itself portrayed in the book is a metaphor*. If a figure so cen-
tral to the book has a metaphorical dimension, then obviously
metaphor must be central to an interpretation of the book.

3.2. *The Collapse of Literal Reference in 1:10*

The collapse of literal reference in 1:10 has already been briefly
addressed at the beginning of the immediately preceding section,

---

[59] The approaches of different scholars to the identity of the speaker in 10:19-
21 are summarised by Polk, *The Prophetic Persona*, 59-75. That Jeremiah is the
speaker is the view of Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up, To Tear Down*, 102; Thomp-
son, *Jeremiah*, 335.

On Jeremiah as the speaker in 4:19, see Berridge *Prophet*, 169; Bright, *Jeremi-
ah*, 34; Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up*, 54; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 160; Rudolph, *Jere-
mia*, 33; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 228. However, Holladay does not give any weight
to 4:19 in his analysis of 10:19 (*Jeremiah 1*, 342).

[60] For this criticism of Holladay, see Polk, *The Prophetic Persona*, 58-59. The
presence of ambiguity in the text is recognised by McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:234.

which focussed on the discrepancy between Jeremiah as subject
of the word-string of infinitives in v. 10, and Yhwh as the subject
of these verbs when they occur elsewhere in the book.

It is also of interest to note that the literal interpretation of
the verse has caused problems for some scholars. In his thorough
study of the word-string Bach addresses the issue of the subject
of the infinitives in v. 10.[61] He proposes that their subject is Yhwh,
precisely on the grounds that nowhere else in the book do the
infinitives occur with Jeremiah as the subject.[62] Bach's solution
to the difficulty is based on a reading of the book's introduction
in the light of its contents! Surely the first movement in the reading
of the book is to read its contents in the light of its introduction.

As part of the book's introduction, 1:10 points to is a repre-
sentation in the book of the figure of the prophet as a metaphor
for Yhwh.

4. The Threat from the North (1:13-16)

Another key idea in the book, the threat from the north, is also
a metaphor, an interpretation which will be established in this
section of the chapter. The procedure will be the same as in the
previous section. A metaphorical interpretation of the threat from
the north will be proposed first, and will be followed by an ex-
amination of various attempts at a literal interpretation of the
expression and the difficulties of sustaining such an interpreta-
tion.

4.1. The Threat from the North as Metaphor

The starting point for establishing the metaphorical dimension
to the threat from the north is 1:14: מצפון תפתח הרעה על כל־ישבי
הארץ ("Out of the north evil shall break forth upon all the inhab-
itants of the land"). The immediate context of v. 14 provides a
clue as to the meaning of צפון.

---

[61] Robert Bach, "Bauen und Pflanzen," *Studien zur Theologie der Alttestamentli-
chen Überlieferungen* (eds. Rolf Rendtorff, Klaus Koch; Neukirchen: Neukirchen-
er Verlag, 1961) 7-32. He takes up four of the infinitives, excluding אבד *hifil*
and הרס on redactional grounds (*ibid.*, 10).

[62] *Ibid.*, 11, *n.* 11.

V. 15 begins: כי הנני קרא לכל־משפחות ממלכות צפונה ("For now I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north"). Where v. 14 identified the origin of the attack as צפון ("the north"), in v. 15 the source of the attack is identified as Yhwh.

The association of צפון with Yhwh is a characteristic of the Zion theological traditions, taken over from Syro-Canaanite mythology. In Ugaritic texts צפון refers to a remote and inaccessible mountain on which the gods dwell.[63] In the Jebusite religious traditions of pre-Israelite Jerusalem צפון refers to Mount Zion, the dwelling place of El-'Elyon, which in turn becomes the dwelling place of Yhwh.[64] Then in Ps 48:2-3 צפון becomes the dwelling place of Yhwh: הר־קדש...הר־ציון ירכתי צפון ("His holy mountain...Mount Zion in the far north"). The term צפון then loses any geographical significance. It is a metaphor for Yhwh's dwelling place. Rather than a geographical entity located in the north, as Yhwh's dwelling place it becomes the very centre of the world.[65]

In the book of Jeremiah צפון signifies something of divine origin. It is used in this way in a number of places in the book.

   a) *Against Judah*: the north is the source of רעה ("evil" – 4:6; 6:1), עם (a people" – 6:22), רעש ("commotion" – 10:22), משפחות ("tribes" – 25:9).

   b) *Against Egypt*: נתנה ביד עם־צפון ("she shall be handed over to a people from the north" – 46:24).

   c) *Against the Philistines*: מים עלים מצפון ("waters are rising out of the north" – 47:2).

   d) *Against Babylon*: עלה עליה גוי מצפון ("out of the north a nation has come up against her" – 50:3), קהל־גוים גדלים מארץ צפון ("a company of great nations from the land of the north" – 50:9), עם בא מצפון ("a people is coming from the north" – 50:41), כי מצפון יבוא־לה השדדים ("for the destroyers shall come against them out of the north" – 51:48).

Besides being the source of threat and evil, the north is also the

---

[63] For this, R. E. Clements, *God and Temple: The Idea of the Divine Presence in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965) 5-6; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986) 78-80; David J. Reimer, "The 'Foe' and the 'North' in Jeremiah," *ZAW* 98 (1986) 230-231.

[64] So, Clements, *God and Temple*, 47-48; Ben C. Ollenburger, *Zion, The City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult* (JSOTSup 41; Sheffield: JSOT, 1987) 44-45.

[65] So, Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, 78-80.

place from which the people will return to the land: הנני מביא אותם מארץ צפון ("See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north – 31:8; see also 3:18; 16:15; 23:8). Furthermore צפון is found in passages whose language is stereotyped or formulaic. It is used in 6:22-25, a passage about the threat of destruction for Judah:

Thus says the LORD:	כה אמר יהוה
See, a people is coming from	הנה עם בא
the land of the north,	מארץ צפון
a great nation is stirring	גוי גדול יעור
from the farthest parts of	מירכתי־ארץ:
the earth (6:22).	

The parallelism here of מארץ צפון with מירכתי־ארץ is found in 31:8, a passage about the people's return to the land: הנני מביא אותם מארץ צפון וקבצתים מירכתי־ארץ ("See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north"). The same parallelism is found in 50:41-44, a passage about Yhwh's threat of destruction against Babylon.[66]

What is particularly striking about these verses is that vv. 41-42 are a nearly verbatim repetition of 6:22-23. In the text of 50:41-42 which follows, the differences between it and 6:22-23 are underlined:

Look, a people is coming from the north;	הנה עם בא מצפון
a mighty nation and <u>many kings</u>	וגוי גדול
<u>are stirring</u> from the farthest parts of the earth	<u>ומלכים רבים יערו</u> מירכתי־ארץ:
They wield bow and spear, they are cruel and have no mercy.	קשת וכידן יחיקו אכזרי המה ולא ירחמו
The sound of them is like the roaring sea;	קולם כים יהמה
they ride upon horses,	ועל־סוסים ירכבו
set in array as a warrior for battle,	ערוך כאיש למלחמה
against you, <u>O daughter Babylon!</u>	עליך <u>בת־בבל</u>

The use of the same language in the threats against Judah and Babylon illustrates the formulaic nature of expressions such as מארץ צפון and מירכתי־ארץ. The pairing is also found in 31:8:

---

[66] On צפון as the source of Yhwh's judgment against Judah and the nations, see Reimer, "The 'Foe' and the 'North' in Jeremiah," 229-230.

הנני מביא אותם מארץ צפון וקבצתים מירכתי־ארץ ("See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth"). The use of the pairing מארץ צפון and מירכתי־ארץ in a text about Judah's return to the land is further illustration of the plastic nature of the language under consideration.

The designation of צפון as the source of the threat 1:14 has a metaphorical significance. It indicates that the threat is of divine origin. Such an understanding is consistent with the significance attached to צפון in other places in the book, in which it is the origin of Yhwh's action for either evil or good against Judah and the nations.

4.2. *The Threat from the North and Literal Reference*

The identification of a literal referent for the threat from the north happens in the context of the historical and geographical. Scholars have turned to the history of Judah in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE to identify who best is represented by the threat from the north. Two groups are commonly proposed as the referent, the Scythians and the Babylonians.

The Scythians were a nomadic group from the Crimea, who were active in Palestine during Jeremiah's lifetime.[67] While this view has the advantage of correlating a specific historical threat with Jeremiah's ministry in the time of Josiah, attempts to identify the Scythians as the enemy from the north in Jeremiah 4–6 have been seriously questioned.[68] In particular the descriptions of the enemy as גוי גדול ("a great nation") with chariots and siege machinery (6:1) do not fit the nomadic Scythians.[69] Two further

---

[67] The Scythian hypothesis was argued especially by H. H. Rowley, "The Early Prophecies of Jeremiah in their Setting," *BJRL* 45 (1962) 198-234, esp. 208-213. His opinion is also supported by J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (London: SCM, 1986) 390; Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, 39-42.

[68] One reason for the rejection of the Scythian hypothesis is that some of the descriptions of the enemy in Jeremiah 4–6 do not seem appropriate to the Scythians. Chariots, used by the enemy from the north (4:13), were probably not part of their equipment (Hyatt, "Jeremiah: Exegesis," 834). As a nomadic people they would not have had siege machinery (6:1), and would have hardly been called a "great nation" (Hopper, "Jeremiah: Exposition," 834).

[69] This is the criticism of Hopper, "Jeremiah: Exposition," 834.

difficulties present themselves in this context. One is the absence of any oracles in the book that can be clearly dated to the time of Josiah. The second is the book's silence about the Josian reform, which has given rise to debate over Jeremiah's attitude to the reform. On the one hand, some scholars argue that he initially supported it but then became disillusioned with its failure to address the real issues of the nation's corruption.[70] On the other hand, others maintain that he did not support the reform and may have even opposed it.[71]

The other view is that the threat from the north came from the Babylonians.[72] This view accommodates the description in chaps. 4–6 of an enemy which has equipment such as siege machinery and chariots, but it too leaves unanswered important questions about the prophet's ministry during the time of Josiah. The book of Jeremiah indicates that the prophet had warned Judah about future punishment since the time of Josiah (25:3; see 1:3 also). What was the threat that Jeremiah identified as Yhwh's judgment during this time? These difficulties can be overcome by postulating a shift in the identity of the threat from the north. At first Jeremiah did not know who the enemy was. When the Babylonians became the dominant power in the region, he then identified them as the agents of Yhwh's judgment.[73]

There are two difficulties with this view. The first is the lack of evidence in the text to indicate a shift in how Jeremiah understood the identity of the threat. The second is again the silence about the reform of Josiah. This latter difficulty can be removed by revising important chronological information in the book. 1:3 refers to the thirteenth year of Josiah, the year 627. Where a majority of scholars have understood it as a referring to the beginning of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry, a minority have argued

---

[70] E.g., Bright, *Jeremiah*, LXXXII-LXXXIII; Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, 106; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 98.

[71] E.g., Hyatt, who argues that he actually opposed the reform ("Jeremiah: Exegesis," 779).

[72] E.g., Clements, *Jeremiah*, 21; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 25-26; J. Philip Hyatt, "The Beginning of Jeremiah's Prophecy," *ZAW* 78 (1966) 204-214.

[73] This is the position of Bright, *Jeremiah*, LXXXII; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 12; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 54. On the other hand, Rowley argues that Jeremiah always had a definite nation in mind when he spoke about the threat from the north ("The Early Prophecies of Jeremiah," 213-214).

that it refers to the year of Jeremiah's birth.[74] They base their
argument in part on a literal interpretation of the expression in
1:5: בטרם אצורך בבטן ידעתיך ובטרם תצא מרחם הקדשתיך ("Before I
formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I
consecrated you"). They hold that the year 627 refers both to the
time of his call and his birth. According to this chronology he
would have been only five years old when the reform began—
hence his silence. The use of this chronology also situates his
ministry more clearly in the time of Babylonian dominance, so
that the threat from the north could come only from them. How-
ever, there is a major difficulty with this solution because of the
reference in 25:3, according to which Jeremiah carried out his
prophetic ministry in the days of Josiah. Proponents of this re-
vised chronology either emend 25:3 or ignore it.[75]

Besides ending up enmeshed in a complex web of historical
issues to which there are no agreed solutions, attempts at a liter-
al identification of the threat from the north in 1:13-16 do not
take account of the word order in v. 14b, an obvious but impor-
tant aspect of its syntax: מצפון תפתח הרעה ("from the north disas-
ter shall break out")[76]. If the north is the expected source of threat,
it is unnecessary that צפון have the place of emphasis.[77] In con-
trast to its position in v. 14a, צפון in v. 15a comes near the end of
the colon. The position of צפון in the place of emphasis indicates
that the source of the threat is completely unexpected. It is pre-
cisely because Yhwh is the source of the attack that צפון has to be
emphasised. It is not just unexpected, but runs counter to the
belief in the divine protection of Jerusalem.

Attempts at establishing a literal referent for the threat from
the north in a reading of the present text fail on two grounds.

---

[74] For this see, e.g., Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 25-26; J. Philip Hyatt, "The Begin-
ning of Jeremiah's Prophecy," 204-214; C. F. Whitley, "The Date of Jeremiah's
Call," *VT* 14 (1964) 467-483.

[75] For Holladay, the expression שלש ועשרים שנה ("twenty three years"—25:3)
is a "gloss" and is inaccurate (*Jeremiah 1*, 668). Hyatt simply notes that the ex-
pression "agrees with 1:2, from which it was probably derived" ("Jeremiah,"
999).

[76] Again, departing from the NRSV whose translation does not reflect the
emphasis of the Hebrew.

[77] Thompson identifies the Philistines, the Assyrians and the Arameans among
enemies who had attacked Judah from the north (*Jeremiah*, 154). Similar com-
ments are found in Herrmann, *Jeremia*, 75.

The first is the complex of difficult historical issues which surround the identity of a late seventh or early sixth century invader of Judah, and which have dogged twentieth century Jeremiah research. The second is the failure to attend to a simple but significant syntactical feature in 1:14. A metaphorical interpretation of the threat from the north is however better able to account for the concerns of the present text.

5. *Conclusion*

The above investigation of Jeremiah 1 has shown that metaphor provides a critical hermeneutical key in the interpretation of the book. This is particularly important for the present study. It means that the figure of Babylon must be considered not just against the backdrop of history, but also against the backdrop of metaphor.

Three central points in the book's introduction were examined: the superscription, the figure of the prophet, and the threat from the north. Common to each of the three was the suspension of literal reference. In the superscription both the book's title and the chronological information contained there could not be interpreted literally within the world of the text. Similarly for the figure of the prophet as one who plucks up and pulls down, and for the threat from the north, literal reference for these could not be sustained.

The suspension of literal reference is of major importance because it is the condition for the emergence of metaphor. An interpretation of the superscription, the figure of the prophet and the threat from the north as metaphors was then articulated. Our analysis above has shown that in the superscription, a passage of great importance for the interpretation of the book, there is a metaphorical level of meaning. It was important to establish the existence of this level of meaning in Jeremiah 1, because it shows that an understanding of the figure of Babylon as a metaphor is neither an invalid nor idiosyncratic reading of the text. The analysis of Jeremiah 1 shows not just that the book uses metaphors, but that central elements in the book are themselves metaphors.

Of particular significance for the present study and its interest

in Babylon is the metaphorical significance of the chronology, which provided a foundation for an interpretation of the exile and Babylon which is peculiar to the book of Jeremiah. The exile is represented as not yet ended, judgment and hope are held together in an unresolved tension, and Babylon is still dominant.

BABYLON IN JEREMIAH 2–24 MT

The focus in the preceding chapter of this study on metaphor as a hermeneutical key lays the grounds for what follows in this chapter. In Jeremiah 2–24 MT there are several strands to the metaphorical representation of Babylon.

There is a clear difference between the representation of Babylon in chaps. 2–20 and that in chaps. 21–24. In chaps. 2–20 Babylon is a metaphor for landlessness, exile and death, whereas in chaps. 21–24 it is associated with life and the possibility of a future for Judah. Within chaps. 2–20 it functions as an organising metaphor, drawing together into a metaphorical network what are disparate and apparently unconnected metaphors for Yhwh's judgment.

The following analysis is divided into two broad sections, Babylon in Jeremiah 2–20, and Babylon in Jeremiah 21–24.

1. *Babylon in Jeremiah 2–20 (MT)*

Within chaps. 2–20 the figure of Babylon is the organising metaphor for Yhwh's judgment against Judah. In reaching this conclusion, the following analysis moves through two stages. The first is an examination of 20:1-6, the passage which contains the first explicit reference to Babylon in the book of Jeremiah. In 20:1-6 Babylon is a metaphor for Judah's being landless. In particular Babylon is described as a) the invader and captor of Judah; b) the agent and place of Judah's exile; c) the killer of Judah's exiles; d) the one who plunders her wealth.

The second stage involves an examination of the passages from earlier in the book which refer to Yhwh's judgment on Judah. The literary connections between 20:1-6 and these passages are such that the figure of Babylon also functions as the organising metaphor, under which are subsumed the previous metaphorical references to invasion, exile, death and plundering in chaps. 2–20. Babylon is the organising metaphor in chaps. 2–20 for Yhwh's judgment against Judah.

What follows is an analysis of the figure of Babylon in 20:1-6, followed by an analysis of its function as an organising metaphor in chaps. 2–20.

1.1. *The Context of 20:1-6*

The first step here is to situate 20:1-6 within the context of chaps. 18–20. The second is to situate these chapters within the larger context of chaps. 11–20.

20:1-6 is linked to what precedes in a number of ways. The phrase הדברים האלה ("these things" – 20:1) connects 20:1-6 with 19:15. Other links between 20:1-6 and what precedes are העיר הזאת ("this city" – 19:15; 20:6) and בית יהוה ("the house of the LORD" – 19:14; 20:1).[1] The verb נבא ("to prophesy") is found in 19:14; 20:1,6; שמע ("to listen") and דבר ("word") in 19:15 and 20:1. As a unit 20:1-6 is also linked to what follows by references to prophecy (vv. 6, 9) and the expression מגור מסביב in vv. 3 and 10.[2]

The immediate context of 20:1-6, chaps. 18–20, are the climax to the material in the confessions.[3] 18:1-11, the first potter text, contains the last call to repentance in the confessions: שובו נא איש מדרכו ("Turn now, all of you from your evil way" – v. 11). In 19:1-13, the second potter text, the divine judgment is imminent: הנני מביא רעה על־המקום הזה ("I am going to bring such disaster upon this place..." – v. 3). The threat is then repeated immediately in 19:15, the verse immediately preceding 20:1-6.

Chaps. 18–20 belong to the larger context of chaps. 11–20, and make up one of the four larger units in the confessions: chaps. 11–12, 13–15, 16–17 and 18–20. Each unit is formed around a basic structure consisting of a superscription which is part of a prose section and a prophetic lament.[4]

---

[1] For this, see Diamond, *The Confessions*, 172.

[2] Smith, *The Laments*, 56. For the links between 20:1-6 and vv. 7-13, see also O'Connor, *The Confessions*, 110.

[3] For chaps. 18-20 as the climax of the confessions, see O'Connor, *The Confessions*, 143. Similarly, Smith notes a development in chaps. 11-20, from the dialogue between Yhwh and people in chaps. 13-15, which includes a prayer of the people, to the dialogue in chaps. 18-20 which contains the people's rejection of God (Smith, *The Laments*, 61).

[4] For a full elaboration of this basic structure in chaps. 11-20, see *ibid.*, 43-60.

The pattern of prose judgment passage and prophetic lament is represented in chaps. 18–20. 18:1-11 is a prose text built on the potter theme; vv. 19-23 a prophetic lament; 19:1-15 another prose text on the potter theme; 20:7-18 prophetic lament. 18:1-11 are followed by a dialogue between Yhwh and the people (vv. 12-18). Here the words of Yhwh (vv. 13-17) are framed by the words of the people which are a rejection of the divine word (vv. 12,18).[5]

Besides their function as the climax of the material in the confessions, chaps. 18–20 form the end of one major section of the whole book. These chapters conclude with a prophetic lament (vv. 7-18), whose ending contains an image which takes us back to the prophet's call. 20:18 begins: למה זה מרחם יצאתי ("Why did I come forth from the womb..."). This is very similar to an expression found previously in the prophetic call narrative: בטרם תצא מרחם ("and before you were born..." – 1:5). It is only in chap. 1 and chap. 20 that we find references to Jeremiah and his mother's womb.[6]

Another reason for identifying 20:18 as the end of a major section of the book is the clear difference between what precedes 20:18 and what follows. Unlike that in chaps. 2–20, the material in chaps. 21–24 contains the names of people who can be historically identified: e.g., the invading Babylonian king Nebuchadrezzar; the Judean kings Zedekiah, Shallum and Jeconiah; the Judean royal officials, Pashhur son of Malchiah and Zephaniah son of Maaseiah.[7]

20:1-6 occupies an important place in the book in two respects: a) it is part of chaps. 18–20, the climax of the confessions; b) it

---

[5] Cf., *ibid.*, 56-60.

[6] The links between 1:5 and 20:18 are noted by William L. Holladay, *The Architecture of Jeremiah 1-20* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press: 1976) 19-20; Ellen Davis Lewin, "Arguing for Authority: A Rhetorical Study of Jeremiah 1.4-19 and 20.7-18," *JSOT* 32 (1985) 105-106; Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 28-30.

[7] Smith argues that in chap. 20 the text "begins to name names" (*The Laments*, 41). He sees this process continued in chaps. 21–25 (*ibid.*, 65-66). However, the naming of Pashhur in 20:1-6 has a different function to the naming of characters in subsequent chapters. In chap. 20 he is the only figure specifically named (v. 1). Other characters such as his friends and the Babylonian king remained unnamed. In 20:1-6 the naming becomes the occasion of a name change for him, by which he embodies the fate of the people. While the function of naming individuals in chaps. 21–24 is yet to be established in this study, it is clear that the process of naming in chap. 20 is not the same as in the chapters which follow.

is situated near the end of chaps. 2–20, which form a major section of the book.

1.2. *Babylon in 20:1-6*

The reference to Babylon in 20:1-6 occurs in the context of an announcement of judgment against Pashhur, a priest and temple official, whose fate of exile and death in Babylon embodies that of Judah.

20:1-6 consists of a short narrative about the binding of Jeremiah in stocks (vv. 1-3a) in which is set a speech by the prophet (vv. 3b-6).[8] References to Pashhur in vv. 1 and 6 frame the passage. The role of Pashhur as both priest and chief officer accounts for his hostility towards Jeremiah, whose words of judgment against Jerusalem (19:14-17) were proclaimed in the court of the temple.[9]

The references to Babylon appear in vv. 3b-6. There is an announcement to Pashhur which involves a word-play on his name (v. 3b), followed by the messenger formula and an announcement of judgment (vv. 4-6). V. 4 contains the first reference to Babylon:

For thus says the LORD:	כי כה אמר יהוה
I am making you a terror to yourself and to all your friends;	הנני נתנך למגור לך ולכל־אהביך
and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies while you look on.	ונפלו בחרב איביהם ועיניך ראות
And I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon;	ואת־כל־יהודה אתן ביד מלך־בבל
he shall carry them captive to Babylon, and shall kill them with the sword. (20:4)	והגלם בבלה והכם בחרב:

---

[8] For a range of possible meanings of מהפכת see McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:460-461; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 454. While both McKane and Holladay settle for "stocks" as a translation, the precise meaning of the word is not clear (see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 543).

[9] There is some uncertainty about the exact nature of Pashhur's office. McKane sees פקיד as indicating a function performed by a particular official, and נגיד as an indicator of rank (*Jeremiah*, 1:460). Holladay is uncertain if פקיד נגיד refers to one or two offices (*ibid.*, 542). Both however agree that the office relates to the keeping of order and decorum in the temple area.

The first point to be explored is the function of Babylon as a metaphor for being landless, a condition which is presented here as the reversal of the promises to the patriarchs, that their descendants would have secure possession of the land. The second point is the relationship between Yhwh and the king of Babylon.

The figure of Pashhur is central to an understanding of Babylon as a metaphor for being landless. The significance of the name given to him in v. 3b, מגור מסביב ("Terror on every side"), is unfolded in v. 4a, in which there is the verb נתן ("to give") with a direct object in suffix form, followed by indirect objects prefixed by the preposition ל ("to", "for"). This pattern is found elsewhere in the book where it indicates the destiny of whoever is signified by the direct object of נתן. In 1:18 it is used of Jeremiah himself: נתתיך היום לעיר מבצר ולעמוד ברזל ולחמות נחשת ("And I for my part have made you today a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall"). In 15:4 it is used of the people of Judah: ונתתים לזועה לכל ממלכות הארץ ("And I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth").[10] Similarly, in 20:4 the designation of Pashhur as מגור is a reference to his destiny.[11]

The word מגור can mean "sojourning", "enmity" or "terror".[12] While the context here of exile to Babylon clearly supports the meaning of "sojourning", the other meanings are also present. The meaning of "terror", given by Rashi and Kimchi, is also suggested by the other passages in which מגור appears: 6:22-29; 20:10; 46:5; 49:29. In 20:4a the association of מגור with death also suggests the meaning of "terror". The meaning of "enmity" is reflected in the Targum of v. 3 which paraphrases מגור מסביב as עלך דקטלין בחרבא מסחור סחור יתכנשון ("Those who kill with the sword shall be gathered together against you round about").[13] The idea of "en-

---

[10] For further instances in the book, see 15:20; 19:7; 29:18.

[11] It has been argued that the designation of Pashhur as מגור indicates that he will be the cause of terror to those around him (so, A. M. Honeyman, "*Mamgôr mis-sambîb* and Jeremiah's Pun," *VT* 4 [1954] 424-426). On the basis of the above analysis of נתן with ל, his conclusion cannot be accepted. For further objections to his position, see the discussion in McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:461-462.

[12] מגור could be derived from the following: גור I, "to sojourn"; גור II, "to stir up strife" (hence the derivation "enmity"); גור III, "to dread". For these meanings see *BDB*, 157-159.

[13] The translation of the Targum is from "The Targum of Jeremiah," *The Aramaic Bible* vol. 12, (trans. Robert Hayward; Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1987). For reference to the Targum's interpretation of מגור מסביב, see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 543. He sees all three meanings operative in these verses (William L.

mity" runs right through the passage: between Jeremiah and Pashhur, between Yhwh and Pashhur, and between Judah and Babylon. It is however the meaning of "sojourning" that provides the link with the patriarchal promises.

The fate of Pashhur is that he will be a sojourner, the condition of Abraham in his wanderings (Gen 17:8). The root גור, with the meaning "to sojourn", and its cognates occur frequently in the patriarchal narratives where they describe Abraham and his wanderings (e.g., Gen 12:10; 19:9; 23:4; 26:3). מגור is used in the context of Yhwh's promise of land to the patriarch: ונתתי לך ולזרעך אחריך את ארץ מגריך את כל־ארץ כנען לאחזת עולם ("And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding" – Gen 17:8).

The designation of Pashhur in Jer 20:1-6 as מגור, together with his change of name, points to similarities with the figure of Abraham.[14] Both are described as sojourners, and both are given changes of name. However the result of this process is very different: for Abraham the ארץ מגריך ("land of sojourning" – Gen 17:8) will become a possession for his descendants, but for Pashhur it is a place of death for him, his household and friends.

However, as vv. 4-6 show, Pashhur is not just an individual, but he also represents Judah. The link between the two is found in v. 4, in which there is a shift in the addressee from Pashhur in v. 4a to Judah in v. 4b. The fate of Pashhur in v. 4a is paralleled by that of Judah in v. 4b. The place of emphasis given to Judah in v. 4bα also points to such a link: ואת־כל־יהודה אתן ביד מלך־בבל ("and all Judah I will give into the hand of the king of Babylon").[15] The use of חרב ("sword") also links Pashhur and Judah, so that the unnamed enemy who will kill Pashhur and his friends with the sword (v. 4a) is connected to the king of Babylon who will kill the exiled people of Judah with the sword (v. 4b). The connection between the fate of Pashhur and that of Judah is also reflected in the structure of the passage: vv. 4a and 6, which are

---

Holladay, "The Covenant with the Patriarchs Overturned: Jeremiah's Intention in 'Terror on Every Side' [Jer 20:1-6]," *JBL* 91 [1972] 306). See also his *Jeremiah 1*, 544-545.

[14] For what follows, see Holladay, "'Terror on Every Side' (Jer 20:1-6)," *JBL* 91 (1972) 305-320.

[15] Translation here is mine. The NRSV does not reflect the emphasis given to כל־יהודה.

about the fate of Pashhur, frame vv. 4b-5, which are about the
fate of Judah.[16] By reason of his destiny of exile and death by
sword, the figure of Pashhur stands as a metaphor for Judah.

Babylon then is the place of מגור ("sojourning") for both Pashhur
and Judah. It is not just the place of death for Pashhur but also
for Judah itself. As a place of exile, Babylon is a metaphor for
being landless, a situation which represents the reversal of the
covenant with the patriarchs.[17]

The second point for analysis is the relationship between Babylon
and Yhwh. In vv. 4b-5 Babylon is represented by the metonymic
figure of its king, through which it is portrayed as the one who
invades, captures and exiles. The presence of the metonymic fig-
ure of the king means that in vv. 4b-5 there are two figures, gram-
matically both masculine singular, whose actions determine Judah's
fate. The subjects and sequence of the verbs in vv. 4b-5 show this.
The subject of the principal verbs is Yhwh, and that of the subor-
dinate verbs is either Babylon or its king. The subject of אתן ("I
will give" – v. 4b) is Yhwh, and then the next two verbs גלה ("to
carry captive") and נכה ("to kill") have the king of Babylon as their

---

[16] In his analysis of these verses Wanke refers to the statement about Pash-
hur's fate in v. 6 as an extravagance, because it simply apportions to him the
same fate as all the other Judeans (*Untersuchungen*, 15-16). His analysis does not
recognise the framing effect of vv. 4a and 6, and thereby limits his understand-
ing of the figure of Pashhur.

[17] The condemnation of Pashhur may also represent a view of the exile dif-
ferent to that found in texts, from the Priestly tradition such as Gen 17:8; 28:4
and 36:7, in which can be seen the Priestly reinterpretation of the patriarchal
promises in the light of the exile. The promise to Abraham of progeny who will
possess the land becomes for the exiles a guarantee that the community of the
exile or post-exilic period has a future. For this view of P see e.g., Sue Boorer,
"The Kerygmatic Intention of the Priestly Document," *AusBR* 25 (1977) 17; Bruce
Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (New York: Doubleday, 1977) 220-221; Claus
Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985) 259-
271.

What is particularly fascinating here about the fate of Pashhur is his identifi-
cation as an official of the temple. While the P tradition sees the ארץ מגורך as a
place of life, there is in Jer 20:1-6 a promise to a temple official that the
ארץ מגורך will mean death. The contrast between the P tradition and that re-
flected in 20:1-6 raises the question of the attitude or attitudes of the Jeremiah
tradition towards such central concerns of the P tradition such as temple and
ritual. One Jeremian view of the temple is foreshadowed in Jer 1:1, which con-
nects the prophet to the priests in Anathoth. It is ironical then that from Ana-
thoth, the place to which Abiathar was banished by Solomon, there comes a
prophet who will preach against the temple and see the destruction of Jerusa-
lem (so, Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 90-91).

subjects. A similar order is found in v. 5. The subject of נתתי ("I will give") is Yhwh, as is that of אתן ("I will give"). Then the verbs which follow – בזז ("to plunder"), לקח ("to take") and בוא *hifil* ("to carry") – all have as their subjects the Babylonians. They function as the instruments of Yhwh in the punishment of Judah.

The subordination of Babylon to Yhwh is also shown by the sequence of a verb in the imperfect tense followed by verbs in the perfect tense. In v. 4b אתן ("I will give") is followed by the verbs והגלם and והכם ("and he shall carry them captive ...and shall kill them"). Similarly in v. 5b, אתן is followed by ולקחום והביאום ובזזום ("and they shall plunder them and seize them and carry them"). These verses bring together Yhwh and the king of Babylon as central figures in Judah's destruction. In both verses the action of Yhwh appears first, followed by that of the Babylonians. The sequence in vv. 4 and 5 of אתן followed by verbs in the perfect tense signifies that the action of the Babylonians is a consequence of Yhwh's action. In the judgment of Judah, Yhwh is the principal figure, the Babylonian king the subordinate.

In 20:1-6 Babylon is a metaphor for being landless. It is a place of sojourning, but unlike Canaan in the patriarchal narratives, it is a place of death. As represented by the figure of its king in 20:1-6 it is the invader and captor of Judah, and the one who exiles and plunders. At the same time it also has a more extensive literary function within chaps. 2–20, which is the subject of analysis in the following section.

1.3. *Babylon as an Organising Metaphor in Jeremiah 2–20 (MT)*

The broader function of Babylon is as an organising metaphor within chaps. 2–20. In these chapters the idea of Yhwh's judgment against Judah is expressed by a series of diverse metaphors, which at first reading appear unconnected to one another. However a reading of 20:1-6 has the effect of unifying these diverse metaphors around the figure of Babylon as the one who invades, captures, exiles and destroys Judah.

20:1-6 is like a lens which concentrates different shafts of light into a single point of focus. That is, the disparate metaphors for judgment are concentrated in the single figure of Babylon. A function of 20:1-6 is to send the reader back to the earlier occurrences of the metaphors of invasion, capture, exile and destruction.

What were read as apparently unconnected metaphors are now seen in the light of 20:1-6 as pointing to the figure of Babylon. It therefore takes on the character of an all-embracing metaphor for Yhwh's judgment, representing all these other metaphors of judgment found earlier in the book. The term organising metaphor is used to designate this aspect of the figure of Babylon.[18]

The texts to be examined in this section of the study are those in chaps. 2–20 which refer to Yhwh's judgment against Judah, which is described by a variety of apparently unconnected metaphors such as an invading army (4:5-6, 14; 5:15-16; 6:22-23), a lion (4:7; 5:6), a leopard (5:6), a harvest (6:9), a return to primal chaos (4:23-26), banishment from the land (5:19; 8:3). As the following analysis shows, because of the links between 20:1-6 and the material in the early chapters of the book, these metaphors are now subsumed by the figure of Babylon.

For the sake of clarity the various metaphors associated with Judah's judgment will be gathered together under three headings, which correspond as far as possible with the characteristics of Babylon in 20:1-6: a) the threat of invasion, under which heading are gathered texts in chaps. 2–20 which are about the threat of invasion and captivity; b) banishment from the land, under which are gathered texts which refer to threats of banishment from the land; c) death by the sword, under which are gathered texts in which the people of Judah are threatened with death.

---

[18] A text does not consist of individual words, expressions or topics, but is rather a complex network in which words, expressions and topics exist in relationship, in which there is a certain hierarchy. In the process of interpretation certain words, expressions or topics within the network are given more importance than others. Such a process is reflected in the use of words such as "primary" and "secondary", or "subordinate" and "govern" to describe the relationship that exists between words, expressions or topics in a text (for this see Riceour, *Interpretation Theory*, 76-79).

Similarly in a text there are not only individual metaphors, but metaphors which are related to one another in what Ricoeur calls a "metaphoric network" (*Rule of Metaphor*, 243-244). Within such networks there are also metaphors which "organize metaphors into networks", thus giving shape or order to a text (*ibid.*, 244). Hence the choice above of the term "organising metaphor". Ricoeur does not settle on a specific term to designate this type of metaphor, but uses various expressions borrowed from other writers such as "archetype" and "root metaphors" (*ibid.*).

1.3.1. *The Threat of Invasion*

Within chaps. 2–20 there are a number of references to Judah as under threat from invasion, and they occur almost exclusively in chaps. 4–6. Some of these texts will be examined here so that we can show how Babylon functions as an organising metaphor. The texts which will be examined here are, in order of treatment, 6:22-26; 4:5-8; 5:15-17. It is because of its strong verbal links with 20:1-6, that 6:22-26 is treated first.

6:22-26 is situated at an important place in the book. It comes near the end of the material in chaps. 4–6, much of which is about the unnamed enemy from the north and the devastation of the land.[19] The material in these chapters begins with 4:1-4, which provides a bridge back to chaps. 2–3, and concludes with a reflection on Jeremiah's ministry (6:27-30).[20] 6:22-26 marks the end of a series of texts predominantly concerned with the threat of an unnamed enemy from the north.

Babylon, as an organising metaphor, represents the invader described in 6:22-26: הנני עם בא מארץ צפון וגוי גדול יעור מירכתי־ארץ ("See, a people is coming from the land of the north, a great nation is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth" – v. 22). The association of Babylon with these verses happens because of the verbal links between 20:1-6 and 6:22-26, particularly v. 25: מגור מסביב כי חרב לאיב ("for the enemy has a sword, terror is on every side"). As Babylon is the enemy in 20:5, so it is here (6:25). As the king of Babylon will bring death by the sword (20:4), so the enemy here has a sword (6:25). Also, as the future of Pashhur and Judah was symbolised in the name מגור מסביב ("Terror on every side" – 20:3), so the same expression describes the people's situation in 6:25.

4:5-8 contain a number of metaphors which are subsumed by Babylon as an organising metaphor for Yhwh's judgment. Like that of 6:22-26, the placement of 4:5-8 is also important. Following the bridging text, 4:1-4, it is the first oracle in chaps. 4–6 and immediately introduces into these chapters the theme of the

---

[19] That the threat from the north is central to these chapters is reflected in the use by Holladay of the term "the foe cycle" to describe these chapters (*Architecture*, 30 and ff.). The emphasis on war in these chapters has also been noted by Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up, To Tear Down*, 72; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 32-50.

[20] On the function of 4:1-4 and its connections both with what precedes (chap. 3) and what follows (chaps. 4-6), see Holladay, *Architecture*, 55-56.

threat from the north: כי רעה אנכי מביא מצפון ("for I am bringing evil from the north" – 4:6). As in 6:22-26 the same metaphor of invasion is found, but in a text of a different literary form. 4:5 begins with instructions to the messenger and is followed by the summons to flight in vv. 5b-6.[21]

The invader is also metaphorically described משחית גוים ("a destroyer of nations" – v. 7). While the phrase itself is a *hapax*, other occurrences of משחית give some help in the interpretation of the expression. In Exod 12:23, which foretells the slaughter of the Egyptians, the agent of death is first referred to as המשחית ("the destroyer") who works under Yhwh's command. The word is also used in 2 Sam 24:16, which refers to the slaughter of seventy thousand men as punishment for David's census. The text describes the agent of the slaughter as מלאך המשחית – literally, "the angel of the destroyer" or "the angel of the destruction". As in Exod 12:23 this figure also works under Yhwh's orders.[22] In the light of this, several observations can be made about the function of משחית here in Jer 4:5-8.

The identification in 20:1-6 of Babylon as Judah's invader brings about a literary relationship between the two expressions, whereby Babylon as an organising metaphor now represents the metaphoric figure משחית גוים. Babylon is therefore a figure similar to the agent of death in Exod 12:23 and 2 Sam 24:16. As these figures are portrayed as Yhwh's agent, so the figure of Babylon takes on that same character. The presence of משחית גוים in this passage signals that the kind of destruction Yhwh brought previously upon the Egyptians and the people of Israel will come to Judah.

Another description of an unnamed invader is found in 5:15-17. Here Babylon, as an organising metaphor for judgment, takes on the characteristics of that invader. Vv. 15-17 are part of a speech about the destruction of the vineyard Israel (5:10-17). Vv. 15-17 is an announcement of punishment, and contains both imagery

---

[21] For the origins of the summons to flight, see Robert Bach, *Die Aufforderung zur Flucht und Kampf im Alttestamentlichen Prophetenspruch* (WMANT 9; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1962) 44-50. For the military significance of קראו מלאו, see D. Winton Thomas, "מלאו in Jeremiah IV.5: A Military Term," *JJS* 3 (1952) 47-52. He is followed by Christensen, *Prophecy and War*, 152-153.

[22] For the connection between the agents of death in Exod 12:23 and 2 Sam 24:16, see Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus* (OTL; Louisville: SCM, 1974) 183; Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 320.

found in other places in the OT and two expressions found only here. We focus firstly on v. 15:

I am going to bring upon you	הנני מביא עליכם
a nation from far away,	גוי ממרחק
O house of Israel, says the LORD.	בית ישראל נאם־יהוה
It is an enduring nation,	גוי איתן הוא
it is an ancient nation,	גוי מעולם הוא
a nation whose language you do not know,	גוי לא־תדע לשנו
nor can you understand what they say.	ולא תשמע מה־ידבר:

Some expressions in v. 15 are stereotypical and like those in Deut 28:49 and Isa 5:26.[23] Other expressions such as גוי איתן ("an enduring nation") and גוי מעולם ("an ancient nation"), not found elsewhere in the OT, contribute further to the portrait of an invader whose power is both frightening and enduring. Similarly, the foreignness of its language adds to its alien character: the invader can neither be understood nor spoken to.[24]

Its terrifying character is intensified by the simile in v. 16 which compares its quiver to an open tomb, and the use of the metaphor of eating in v. 17 which uses the verb אכל ("to eat, consume") four times:

They shall eat up your harvest and your food;	ואכל קצירך לחמה
they shall eat up your sons and your daughters;	יאכלו בניך ובנותיך
they shall eat up your flocks and your herds;	יאכל צאנך ובקרך
they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees;	יאכל גפנך ותאנתך

---

[23] So, Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 185; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 188. In Deut 28:49 the expression גוי מרחוק is one of a number of stereotypical expressions used to describe the nation summoned by Yhwh to attack Judah (so, Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 356).

The plural form גוים מרחוק ("nations from far away") is used in Isa 5:26. Wildberger maintains that it refers specifically to the Assyrians, but concludes this on the basis of a reorganisation of the present text by which Isa 5:26-29 is read after 9:17-20 (*Isaiah 1-12*, 226-227). Kaiser also judges 5:26-29 to have been displaced, but places it after 10:4. He also maintains that the expression was originally singular and referred to the Babylonian invasion in 587. Subsequently a redactor changed it to the plural גוים מרחוק so that it would refer to the conflict at the end time when the nations will come up against Jerusalem (*Isaiah 1-12*, 111-112, 220).

[24] Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 39.

The use of the metaphor of eating to describe the invader is also found in Deut 28:51. However the description in Jer 5:17 is more extreme because of its reference to the eating of sons and daughters, an idea missing from the former passage.

The picture is one of extreme terror. As an organising metaphor for the judgment, the figure of Babylon subsumes the characteristics of this unnamed terrifying figure.

In view of 20:1-6 the various metaphors used to describe the threatened invasion of the land in 6:22-26; 4:5-8 and 5:15-17 are given focus by the figure of Babylon. In this way it functions as the organising metaphor for the network of metaphors about the threat of invasion. What emerges then is part of a portrait of Babylon as the terrifying invader who will kill the inhabitants of Judah just as surely as the angel of Yhwh killed the Egyptians.

1.3.2. *Banishment from the Land*

The figure of Babylon is also an organising metaphor for banishment from the land, again because of the links between 20:1-6 and material from earlier in the book which refers to Judah's banishment from the land. This understanding of Babylon will be supported by an analysis of texts which refer to the threat of banishment from the land: 5:18-19; 8:1-3; 9:11-15 (9:12-16 NRSV); 16:10-13.

5:18-19 consist of a short proclamation of salvation (v. 18) and a question-and-answer schema (v. 19).[25] The effect of v. 18 is to mitigate the threat of total destruction in vv. 10-17. The question-and-answer schema in v. 19 has a didactic function, giving an explanation for the disaster. Where vv. 15-17 describe the judgment as the destruction of people and land by the invader, v. 18 reads: לא־אעשה אתכם כלה ("I will not make a full end of you"). In v. 19 the disaster is described as banishment, so that exile becomes a mitigated form of the original threat. In view of 20:1-6 Babylon becomes a metaphor for exile in an unnamed land, and according to 5:18-19 has the topography of a place of servitude.

9:11-15 (vv. 12-16 NRSV) consist of a question-and-answer schema (vv. 11-13) and an announcement of punishment (vv. 14-15).[26]

---

[25] So, Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 190; Thiel *Jeremia 1-25*, 98.

[26] While similar to 5:18-19 in form, 9:11-15 have different questions. V. 11 contains three questions, the first two of which have a sapiential character: מי־האיש החכם ויבן את־זאת ואשר דבר פי־יהוה אליו ויגדה ("Who is the man so wise

9:11-15 reflects two phases of punishment, devastation of the land, and then death and banishment. V. 11 refers to the land as already devastated, the grounds for which are then given in vv. 12-13. Vv. 14-15 are connected to vv. 12-13 by לכן ("therefore"), so that the latter verses now function not only as the ground for the punishment in v. 11, but also for that in vv. 14-15.

The announcement of judgment (v. 14-15) threatens the people with death and banishment. Death is promised both when they are in the land and when they are banished. Where 5:19 spoke of banishment in one land, 9:15 indicates a wider dispersal:

I will scatter them among nations	והפצותים בגוים
that neither they nor their ancestors have known;	אשר לא ידעו המה ואבותם
and I will send the sword after them,	ושלחתי אחריהם את־חחרב
until I have consumed them. (9:15 [9:16 NRSV])	עד כלותי אותם

Again, on the basis of 20:1-6, the metaphors of judgment are subsumed under the organising metaphor of Babylon. Exile to Babylon in 20:1-6 now embraces dispersal among the nations, so that the figure of Babylon now metaphorically represents these unnamed nations.

Babylon also takes on the character of a place of death. In 20:4 it is a place both of exile for Judah and of death by sword for those exiled there. In 9:11-15 death by sword is the fate of those whom Yhwh will scatter in unnamed lands, so that they become places of death. In 20:4 Babylon is a place of death, and so comes to metaphorically represent these unnamed lands. Similarly in 8:3 the people are threatened with dispersal in unnamed places, which are also places of death. As with 9:11-15 the two metaphors are

---

that he can understand this? To whom has the mouth of the LORD spoken, that he may declare it?" – v. 12 NRSV). The first question is similar in its language to the conclusion of the book of Hosea: מי חכם ויבן אלה ("Whoever is wise, let him understand these things" – Hos 14:10). For this, see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 243-244; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 307. As the conclusion to the book of Hosea, the expression addresses the possible misinterpretation of the "ways of Yhwh" (Hos 14:10), an issue which is also important in the book of Jeremiah. In Jer 9:12-14 the interpretation of the land's desolation is clearly articulated. The need for such a statement points to a lack of comprehension in the audience about the reason for the destruction of the land. The rhetorical question in Jer 8:19 points to their lack of comprehension: היהוה אין בציון אם־מלכה אין בה ("Is the LORD not in Zion? Is her King not in her?").

subsumed by the figure of Babylon in its function as an organis-
ing metaphor.

16:10-13 also has the form of the question-and-answer schema.[27]
Like 5:19 and 9:11-15, it too interprets the judgment as the re-
sult of Judah's worship of false gods (16:11). Like 9:14-15 it por-
trays the judgment as still in the future (16:13). Like 5:19 it por-
trays the judgment as banishment to an unnamed land. Where
5:19 speaks of the people as the servants of strangers, 16:13 re-
fers to the service of other gods. The expression אלהים אחרים ("other
gods" – v. 13) is surely ironic. According to 16:11 it is because
the people went after other gods that they are to be punished.
Part of their punishment is to do the very thing for which they
are to be punished! Babylon then becomes a metaphor for this
situation – i.e., exile in an unnamed land and the service of for-
eign gods.

In the passages just examined, the figure of Babylon is an or-
ganising metaphor for the place of banishment. In its topogra-
phy it is an undefined diffuse place which embraces both a sin-
gle land and various lands, none of which are named. Where
Babylon represents various lands, it is portrayed as a place of death
(8:1-3; 9:11-15). Where it represents a single land, it is represent-
ed as a place of servitude for Judah, either to other peoples or to
other gods (5:18-19; 16:1-3). The significance of these two views
– banishment as mitigated punishment and banishment as lead-
ing to death – will be examined later in the study.

1.3.3. *Death by the Sword*

The sword is a metaphor for Yhwh's judgment in chaps. 2–20.
The presence of חרב ("sword") in both 20:1-6 and in a number
of other places in chaps. 2–20 provides another series of links
between Babylon and the divine judgment. These links reinforce
the function of Babylon as an organising metaphor for the judg-
ment.

In chaps. 2–20 חרב is found approximately twenty times. The
relevant texts for this study are gathered in two groups. One consists
of texts which refer to a human agent who wields the sword: 5:12,17;
6:25; 11:22; 15:1-4; 16:4; 18:21; 19:7. The other group consists of
texts which identify Yhwh as the one who uses the sword. From

---

[27] As noted by Thiel, *Jeremia 1-25*, 198.

this group the relevant texts are 9:11-15 (9:12-16 NRSV) and 12:7-13.

The word חרב is found in 6:25b: כי חרב לאיב מגור מסביב ("for the enemy has a sword, terror is on every side"). The verse is linked with 20:1-6 by חרב, איב ("enemy") and מגור מסביב ("terror on every side"). The metaphoric figure of the enemy with a sword is now subsumed via 20:1-6 by the organising metaphor of Babylon. A similar process is at work in 5:15-17b: ירשש ערי מבצריך אשר אתה בוטח בהנה בחרב ("they shall destroy with the sword your fortified cities in which you trust"). חרב reinforces the metaphoric identity of Babylon with the devouring enemy of 5:15-17.[28] Likewise in 15:3,7; 16:4; 18:21 and 19:7, the sword as a metaphor of the divine judgment is subsumed by the organising metaphor of Babylon.

15:1-4 is an important text in the creation of the network of metaphors of judgment in chaps. 2–20. There are four metaphors for the judgment in 15:2: מות ("death"), חרב ("sword"), רעב ("famine") and שבי ("captivity"). 15:1-4 and 20:1-6 are linked then by מות, חרב and שבי ("captivity"). The punishment threatened in 15:1-4 is fourfold: דבר ("pestilence"), חרב ("sword"), רעב ("famine") and שבי ("captivity"). Because of its links with 20:1-6 the punishment in 15:1-4 is associated with Babylon, which is the agent of death by the sword and captivity. Pestilence and famine are consequences of the warfare associated with invasion and captivity.[29]

Passages which contain חרב also establish literary links between the figure of Babylon and that of Yhwh. 9:15 (9:16 NRSV) describes Yhwh as acting directly to destroy Judah: ושלחתי אחריהם את־החרב עד כלותי אותם ("and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them"). While here it is Yhwh who has the sword, in 20:1-6 it is wielded by Babylon.

In 9:11-15 and 12:7-13 the metaphor of the sword is more directly associated with Yhwh, especially in the case of the former passage. In 9:15 Yhwh directly brings about the people's extermination: ושלחתי אחריהם את־החרב עד לכותי אותם ("and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them").[30] In 12:7-13 the destruction is the result of the abandonment of the people

---

[28] See above, 66-67.

[29] So, Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 387.

[30] The NRSV translates שדדים here by the rather weak word "spoilers", whereas in other places (e.g., 4:20; 5:6; 6:26) it translates words derived from the root שדד by derivatives of the stronger English word "destroy".

by Yhwh, as the concentration of first person singular verbs and pronominal suffixes in v. 7 shows: עזבתי את־ביתי נטשתי את־נחלתי נתתי את־ידדות נפשי בכף איביה ("I have forsaken my house, I have abandoned my heritage; I have given the beloved of my heart into the hands of her enemies").

The destruction will be executed by wild animals (v. 9), by unnamed invaders (v. 10, 12). The threat of death by the sword appears in 12:12, where the destruction is linked with Yhwh, but in a more oblique way than in 9:15: באו שדדים כי חרב ליהוה אכלה מקצה־ארץ ועד־קצה הארץ ("destroyers have come; for the sword of the LORD devours from one end of the land to the other"). While it is not clear if the sword is wielded by Yhwh or by unnamed destroyers, the figure of the sword brings about an identification of the figures of Yhwh and the unnamed attackers. Because of the links between 20:1-6 and 12:7-13, the figure of Babylon subsumes the metaphors of the sword of Yhwh, an association strengthened by the presence in 12:7-13 of expressions which in other places are associated with Babylon. Where 12:7 has נתתי...בכף איביה ("I will give...into the hands of her enemies"), 20:5 reads אתן ביד איביהם ("I will give into their enemies"). Also the words רעים ("shepherds" – 12:10) and שדדים ("destroyers" – v. 12), used in 6:3 and 6:26 respectively to refer to the invader, are also subsumed by the figure of Babylon.

In view of 20:1-6 the individual metaphor of death by the sword is now associated with the figure of Babylon, which is identified as the one who brings death by the sword.

1.4. *Conclusions*

The analysis of the figure of Babylon in chaps. 2–20 consisted of two phases. The first was the study of 20:1-6, the first text in the book which mentions Babylon explicitly. Within these verses Babylon was identified as a metaphor for being landless, and as such represented the reversal of the patriarchal traditions about the gift of the land. As a place it represents death for the exiles. In the figure of its king it was presented as the one who invades, captures, exiles, kills and plunders Judah and its people.

The second phase of the analysis was a study of Babylon as an organising metaphor within chaps. 2–20. The figure of Babylon in these chapters is that of a metaphor around which the net-

work of metaphors associated with Yhwh's judgment is organised. In particular, it subsumes the metaphors for invasion, banishment and death by the sword. The foundation of such an understanding of Babylon is the links between 20:1-6 and previous passages in chaps. 2–20 about Yhwh's judgment on Judah.

Because of the position of 20:1-6 within chaps. 2–20, the figure of Babylon as a metaphor points both backwards and forwards. In its function as an organising metaphor, it points backwards. After reading 20:1-6 the reader is sent back to the individual metaphors of judgment and can interpret them in the light of Babylon's function as an organising metaphor. In these chapters there are threats of the invasion and captivity of Judah, but the invader or captor is never identified. There are threats of banishment, but neither the agent nor the place of banishment are identified. There are also references to death and destruction, but the destroyers and plunderers are not identified. Then in 20:1-6, near the end of chaps. 2–20, the figure of Babylon appears, drawing together and representing the disparate metaphors for judgment which are otherwise unorganised and often unrelated. As an organising metaphor the figure of Babylon gives a focus to the material in chaps. 2–20.

The figure of Babylon also points forwards to chaps. 21–24 in which its function as a metaphor for landlessness, exile and death is further developed.

The stage is then set for the next section of the book, chaps. 21–24, which begin with events set in or near the year 587.

2. Babylon in Jeremiah 21–24 (MT)

References to Babylon are found in 21:1-10 and chap. 24. Before an analysis of these texts is possible, it is first necessary to situate Jeremiah 21–24 within the context of the book.

2.1. Context of Jeremiah 21–24

Chaps. 21–24 form a block which is to be distinguished from what precedes and follows. 21:1 begins with the expression הדבר אשר־היה אל־ירמיהו מאת יהוה ("This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD"), variants of which were used to divide the

material in chaps. 11-20.[31] However the superscription of 21:1 also has a temporal clause, an element which is missing from chaps. 11–20: בשלח אליו המלך צדקיהו את פשחור בן־מלכיה ואת־צפניה בן־מעשיה הכהן לאמר ("when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur son of Malchiah and the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah, saying").[32]

Another indication that 21:1 begins a new section of the book is the absence of the first person speeches of the confessions. These are not continued beyond chap. 20. Unlike the material in chaps. 11–20, the poetic oracles in chaps. 21–24 are presented as the word of Yhwh directed to the kings or prophets (e.g., 22:13-23; 23:9-14).

Chap. 24 concludes this section of the book. Chap. 24 consists of a word-symbol vision (vv. 1-3), which is explained in the form of an oracle of deliverance (vv. 4-7) and a description of punishment (vv. 8-10).[33] It is quite different in form and content to chap. 25, which consists of a regnal citation (v. 1), a prophetic judgment speech (vv. 3-14), a prophetic symbolic action (vv. 15-29), and prophetic oracles which contain elements of theophany (vv. 30-31) and lament (vv. 32-38). 25:3 looks back over the ministry of Jeremiah, and is part of the accusation in the judgment speech (vv. 3-14). This retrospective view gives chap. 25 the character of a conclusion. The message has been preached, but not heeded. What remains now is the inevitable execution of Yhwh's judgment.

Furthermore, there are similarities between 21:1-10 and chap. 24 which also support the conclusion that chaps. 21–24 is a sep-

---

[31] The forms of the superscriptions in chaps. 11–20 are הדבר אשר היה אל־ירמיהו מאת יהוה לאמר ("The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying" – 11:1; 18:1); ויהי דבר־יהוה אלי שנית לאמר ("And the word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying" – 13:3); ויהי דבר־יהוה אלי לאמר ("The word of the LORD came to me" – 16:1).

[32] McKane does not accept that 21:1 contains a superscription of chaps. 21–24. However the reasons for his position are not clear (*Jeremiah*, 1:495-496). For the view that 21:1 is a superscription for this material see Diamond, *Confessions*, 170; Thiel, *Jeremia 1-25*, 230.

[33] The term "word-symbol vision" is used by Hals to describe a vision "in which the prophet sees an object that leads to the perception of a word of God" (Ronald M. Hals, *Ezekiel*, [FOTL 19 Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989] 358). The same term is also used by S. Böhmer, *Heimkehr und Neuer Bund* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1976) 31. Berridge calls it a "Vision-Gattung" (*Prophet*, 63)

The term "oracle of deliverance" is used by Raitt in his analysis of the deliverance passages in the books of Ezekiel and Jeremiah (Thomas M. Raitt, *A Theology of Exile: Judgement/Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel* [Philadelphia, Fortress, 1977] 128ff.).

arate unit. There are similarities of language between 21:1-10 and chap. 24. Besides the contrasting pair רעה and טוב, both passages have נבוכדראצר מלך בבל ("Nebuchadrezzar, the king of Babylon" – 21:2,7; 24:1), צדקיהו ("Zedekiah" – 21:1,7; 24:8), הכשדים ("the Chaldeans – 21:4,9; 24:5), and the word string דבר, רעב, חרב ("sword, famine and pestilence" – 21:7,9; 24:10).

Both 21:1-10 and chap. 24 address the issue of Judah's future. 21:1-10 raises the question of divine intervention which would guarantee a future for Jerusalem and its leadership: דרש־נא בעדנו את־יהוה...אולי יעשה יהוה אותנו ככל־נפלאתיו ("Please inquire of the LORD on our behalf...perhaps the LORD will perform a wonderful deed for us" – v. 2). An answer about the future is given in chap. 24: כן־אכיר את־גלות יהודה אשר שלחתי מן־המקום הזה ארץ כשדים לטובה ("So I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans" – v. 5).[34] The contrasting fate of those in the city and those in exile is also found in 21:10 and 24:6. According to 21:10 the fate of the city is destruction: כי שמתי פני בעיר הזאת לרעה ולא לטובה ("For I have set my face against this city for evil and not for good"). A similarly structured expression is used in 24:6 to describe the fate of the exiles: ושמתי עיני עליהם לטובה ("I will set my eyes upon them for good").

These thematic and linguistic similarities validate the judgment that 21:1-10 and chap. 24 frame chaps. 21–24, and that these chapters stand as a separate section within the book.[35]

In chaps. 21–24 individual characters are specifically identified, something which has occurred earlier in the book only occasionally (1:1-3; 11:21,23; 20:1). Oracles in chaps. 21–24 also have headings which identify their addressee: e.g., 21:11-12 is addressed to Shallum, vv. 18-23 to Jehoiakim, vv. 24-30 to Jeconiah. Consequently the material in chaps. 21–24 is different in character to what has preceded, and this difference will influence the process of interpretation.[36]

---

[34] For this see Pohlmann, *Studien*, 42-43.

[35] Against Brueggemann (*To Pluck Up, To Tear Down*, 181), Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 568) and Thompson (*Jeremiah*, 465), all of whom do not attend to the linguistic and thematic similarities between 21:1-10 and chap. 24.

[36] Smith argues that in chap. 20 the text "begins to name names" (*The Laments of Jeremiah*, 41). He sees this process continued in chaps. 21-25 (*ibid.*, 65-66). However, the naming of Pashhur in 20:1-6 has a different function to the naming of characters in subsequent chapters. In chap. 20 he is the only figure

2.2. *Babylon in 21:1-10*

The representation of Babylon in 21:1-10 differs from that in chaps. 2–20. In the latter Babylon was represented in two ways: as a place and as a human agent. In 21:1-10 its dominant representation is as a human agent, and is portrayed principally by the figure of its king. The passage divides into vv. 1-2 (the enquiry by Zedekiah), vv. 3-7 (Jeremiah's reply), vv. 8-10 (a second response to the enquiry).[37]

In vv. 1-2 we find the first mention of Nebuchadrezzar in the book. The name means "'Nabu guards the boundary' or 'Nabu guards the son'".[38] In v. 1 he is identified simply as מלך־בבל ("the king of Babylon"). Although Zedekiah appears in the book's superscription (1:1-3), 21:1-2 is also the first instance in the book in which he is named. These verses bring together the metonymic figures of the two kings, who represent the two forces in conflict.[39] From Zedekiah's point of view, the opponents are himself and Nebuchadrezzar, as his appeal to Jeremiah indicates.

The expression דרש־נא [בעדנו] את־יהוה ("Please inquire of the LORD [on our behalf]"—21:2) is used of the process of consulting a prophet.[40] In this context the word נפלאתיו ("his wonderful deeds" – v. 2) refers to the Assyrian siege, when the prophet Isaiah revealed to king Hezekiah that his prayer for deliverance would

---

specifically named (v. 1). Other characters such as his friends and the Babylonian king remained unnamed. In 20:1-6 the naming becomes the occasion of a name change for him, by which he embodies the fate of the people. While the function of naming individuals in chaps. 21–24 is yet to be established in this study, it is clear that the significance of naming in chap. 20 is not the same as in the chapters which follow.

[37] McKane argues that v. 7 does not follow from v. 6. For him vv. 5-6 are about "an all-embracing destruction", whereas v. 6 speaks of survivors (*Jeremiah*, 1:494). A continuity between vv. 6 and 7 is held by Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 569) and Rudolph (*Jeremia*, 135). In regard to McKane's argument, it is not clear whether v. 6 excludes the idea of survivors. The final form of the text brings together two strands of thought. One is that of the holy war, the other is that of the survivors of the disaste. At one level these are incompatible because the practice of the holy war allows for no survivors. However the use of holy war imagery here emphasises that the disaster is the work of Yhwh. In this way 21:1-10 resumes a theme found in 1:13-19, the attack by Yhwh against Jerusalem.

[38] McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:496. See also Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 571; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 134.

[39] So, Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 409-410.

[40] E.g., 1 Kings 22:5; 2 Kings 22:13; 2 Chron 18:4. For this see Pohlmann, *Studien*, 33; S. Wagner, "דרש," *TDOT*, 3:302-303.

be answered (2 Kings 19:20; Isa 37:21).[41] Zedekiah sees his situation as similar to that of Hezekiah during the Assyrian siege.

In vv. 1-2 Babylon is represented metonymically by the figure of Nebuchadrezzar. While Zedekiah's appeal to Jeremiah suggests that Nebuchadrezzar is a parallel figure to Sennacherib, this perspective is undermined by vv. 3-7.

Vv. 3-7 are an announcement of punishment. The messenger formula is found in v. 4aα. The intervention is vv. 4aβ-7a, which begins with הנה and has Yhwh speaking in the first person. The result is v. 7b.[42]

A key word in the intervention is לחם ("to fight").[43] It occurs in vv. 2, 4 and 5. In v. 2 its subject is Nebuchadrezzar, in v. 4 the Judean soldiers.[44] However its presence in v. 5 is of most significance because there its subject is Yhwh:

---

[41] For נפלאתיו the NRSV has "a wonderful deed", but the more literal translation is "his wonderful deeds". The similarity between the circumstances of 21:1-2 and the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians is noted by Duhm, *Jeremia*, 169; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:496; Pohlmann, *Studien*, 33; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 135; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 467. The use of the archaic form תאמרן in 21:3 (כה תאמרן אל־צדקיהו – "Thus you shall say to Zedekiah") is also found in the Isaiah-Hezekiah narrative: כה תאמרון אל־חזקיהו ("Thus you shall say to Hezekiah" – 2 Kings 19:10; Isa 37:10). On this, see Pohlmann, *Studien*, 33 n. 80.

[42] For this description of the prophetic announcement of punishment, see Hals, *Ezekiel*, 352.

[43] As noted by Thiel, *Jeremia*, 233.

[44] V. 4 has caused problems for its interpreters. A first difficulty in the verse is the meaning of כלי המלחמה, which is translated by the NRSV as "the weapons of war", but which is interpreted by Bright as "a metonymy for Judah's troops" (*Jeremiah*, 215). However, Weippert's analysis of curses in some ancient Hittite and Accadian treaties shows that the equivalent expression in these treaties refers to weapons, not soldiers (Helga Weippert, "Jahwekrieg und Bundesfluch in Jer 21:1-7," *ZAW* 82 [1970] 402-406). Her analysis of some holy war texts provides a further clue in interpreting the verse. For example, in Judg 7:22 we find the expression וישם יהוה את חרב איש ברעהו ובכל־המחנה ("The LORD set every man's sword against his fellow and against all the army"). Similar expressions are found in 1 Sam 14:20 and Zech 14:13, and they indicate that the effect of holy war on the enemy is their real or apparent self-destruction (*ibid.*, 400-401). On the basis of the above analysis, the best translation for כלי המלחמה would seem to be "the weapons of war", which the enemy in the holy war are said to turn on themselves.

A futher difficulty with v. 4 is the meaning of אותם ("them") in the expression ואספתי אותם אל־תוך העיר הזאת ("and I will bring them together into the centre of this city"). Does אותם refer to weapons or defenders? Judg 20:11 and Zech 14:2 contain the verb אסף with the preposition אל to describe the gathering of troops for war. The construction of Zech 14:2 is identical to that in Jer 21:4 – ואספתי את־כל־הגוים אל־ירושלם למלחמה ("For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle"). The object of אספתי here is the troops assembled

I myself will fight against you	ונלחמתי אני אתכם
with outstretched hand and	ביד נטויה
mighty arm,	ובזרוע חזקה
in anger, in fury,	ובאף ובחמה
and in great wrath.	ובקצף גדול:
(Jer 21:5	

The use of the personal pronoun אני with ונלחמתי emphasises the subject of the verb. The identity of Jerusalem's attacker is now revealed as Yhwh himself. Any suggestion that the situation of Zedekiah is parallel to that of Hezekiah is ruled out. Zedekiah is no Hezekiah and Nebuchadrezzar is no Sennacherib.

Furthermore, Yhwh's action in v. 5 is presented as a reversal of the exodus theme. There are two strategies by which the reversal is achieved. The first is the use of the expression ביד נטויה ובזרוע חזקה ("with outstretched hand and mighty arm"). This is in fact a literal reversal of the usual expression associated with the deliverance from Egypt, viz., ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה ("with mighty hand and outstretched arm"). Here the reversal at the literary level signals the reversal at the level of the theological.[45]

The second strategy is the use of the word string דבר ("pestilence"), חרב ("sword") and רעב ("famine"). This takes us back to 15:1-4. Here we find רעב, חרב with מות ("death"), a synonym for דבר.[46] 15:1-4 is about Yhwh's threatened punishment, presented as a reversal of the exodus from Egypt. The language of 15:1 mimics the story of the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh: אם־יעמד משה ושמואל לפני אין נפשי אל־העם הזה שלח מעל־פני ויצאו ("Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go!"). The use here of שלח piel in the singular imperative is reminiscent of Moses' demand to Pharaoh: שלח את־עמי ("let my people go" – Exod 5:1).[47] However in Jer 15:1 "the command comes from Yahweh and is a dismissal from the divine presence".[48]

---

for the assault. Judg 20:11 also shows that in such a context אסף refers to troops, not weapons: ויאסף כל־האיש ישראל אל־העיר ("So all the men of Israel gathered against the city"). In Jer 21:4 then the referent of אותם would seem to be the Babylonian troops (for this, see ibid., 406-407).

[45] As noted by a number of commentators: e.g., Holladay, Jeremiah 1, 569-572; Rudolph, Jeremia, 134; Thiel, Jeremia 1-25, 233-234; Thompson, Jeremiah, 468.

[46] So, Holladay, "Prototypes and Copies," 362. For a full listing of the occurrences of this word-string, see ibid., 361-362.

[47] For other occurrences of this expression see Exod 7:16,26; 8:16; 9:1,13; 10:3,7.

[48] Carroll, Jeremiah, 320. For the connection between Jer 15:1-4 and the Moses-Pharaoh confrontations, see ibid. 319-320.

15:2 plays on the association of the verb יצא ("to go out") with the exodus: והיה כי־יאמרו אליך אנה נצא ("And when they say to you, 'Where shall we go?'"). In the exodus tradition the people's going out from Egypt culminated in their entry to the land: ויוצנו יהוה ממצרים...ויבאנו אל־המקום הזה ויתן־לנו את־הארץ הזאת ("The LORD brought us out of Egypt ...and he brought us into this place and gave us this land" – Deut 26:8-9).[49] The irony in Jer 15:2 is that the people's going out will culminate in death or captivity, as the answer to the question "To where shall we go out?" reveals: אשר למות למות ואשר לחרב לחרב ואשר לרעב לרעב ואשר לשבי לשבי ("Those destined for pestilence, to pestilence, and those destined for the sword, to the sword; those destined for famine, to famine, and those destined for captivity, to captivity"). The use in 21:7 of a similar word string to that in 15:1-4 is another instance of the reversal of the exodus traditions.

Within 21:7 there is a shift in focus from the action of Yhwh to that of Nebuchadrezzar. His relationship to Yhwh is described in similar terms to that of Yhwh to the unnamed Babylonian king in 20:4. Both 20:4 and 21:7a have the same word string which consists of the verb נתן ("to give"), with Yhwh as subject, and the expression ביד מלך־בבל. The object of the verb in both passages are the people of Judah: in 20:4 ואת־כל־יהודה ("and all Judah"), in 21:7 את־צדקיהו מלך־יהודה ואת־עבדיו ואת־העם ואת־הנשארים בעיר ("Zedekiah of Judah, and his servants, and the people in this city").

In both 20:4 and 21:7a the figure of the Babylonian king is portrayed as a subordinate figure to that of Yhwh. However in 21:7b there is a closer association between the two:

Afterward, says the LORD,	ואחרי־כן נאם־יהוה
I will give King Zedekiah of	אתן את־צדקיהו
Judah, and his servants,	מלך־יהודה את־עבדיו
and the people in this city	ואת־העם
—those who survive the	ואת־הנשארים בעיר הזאת
pestilence, sword, and famine—	מן־החרב מן־הרעב
into the hands of King	ביד נבוכדראער מלך־בבל
Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon,	
into the hands of their	וביד איביהם
enemies,	וביד מבקשי נפשם
into the hands of those	

---

[49] For the linking of the departure from Egypt and the gift of the land see also Deut 6:21; 9:28; 11:10.

who seek their lives.
He shall strike them down with והכם לפי־חרב
the edge of the sword;
he shall not pity them, לא־יחוס עליהם
or spare them, ולא יחמל
or have compassion. ולא ירחם:
(Jer 21:7 MT)

Here Nebuchadrezzar is the subject of four verbs: והכם לפי־חרב
לא־יחוס עליהם ולא יחמל ולא ירחם ("He shall strike them down with
the edge of the sword; he shall not pity them, or spare them, or
have compassion"). The verbs חוס ("to pity"), חמל ("to spare") and
רחם ("to have compassion") appear together in only one other
place in the book (13:14), in which their subject is Yhwh. 13:12-
14 is an oracle addressed to all the inhabitants of Judah, amongst
whom unnamed kings, priests and prophets are specified. The
oracle concludes: לא־אחמול ולא־אחוס ולא ארחם מהשחיתם ("I will not
pity or spare or have compassion when I destroy them" – 13:14).

Such an association of the figure of the Babylonian king with
Yhwh is peculiar to the MT and is not found in the LXX:

And after these things   καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα—
thus says the LORD: οὕτως λέγει κύριος—
I will give Zedekiah,   δώσω τὸν Σεδεκιαν
king of Judah   βασιλέα Ιουδα
and all his servants   καὶ τοὺς παῖδας αὐτοῦ
and the people remaining   καὶ τὸν λαὸν τὸν καταλειφθέντα
behind in this city—   ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ
after death   ἀπὸ τοῦ θανάτου
and after famine   καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ λιμοῦ
and after the sword—   καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς μαχαίρας
into the hands of their   εἰς χεῖρας ἐχθρῶν αὐτῶν
enemies,
those seeking their lives,   τῶν ζητούντων τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν καὶ
and they will cut them down   κατακόψουσιν αὐτοὺς
by the edge of the sword;   ἐν στόματι μαχαίρας:
I will not spare them, nor   οὐ φείσομαι ἐπ' αὐτοῖς
will I have compassion on them   καὶ οὐ μὴ οἰκτιρήσω αὐτούς
(Jer 21:7 LXX)

There are significant differences in this verse between the MT
and the LXX. The first is the omission in the LXX of the expres-
sion ביד נבוכדראצר מלך־בבל ("into the hands of Nebuchadrezzar,
king of Babylon"). The second is the expression καὶ κατακόψουσιν
αὐτούς ("and they shall cut them down"). Here the MT has והכם

("and he shall strike them down"). The third is the difference in subject of the final verbs in the verse. Where the MT has Nebuchadrezzar as these verbs' subject, the LXX has Yhwh.[50]

The MT's emphasis on the figure of Nebuchadrezzar can also be seen in 21:4. Referring to Judah's weapons of war, 21:4 reads:

I am going to turn back	הנני מסב
the weapons of war	את־כלי המלחמה
that are in your hands	אשר בידכם
and with which you are fighting	אשר אתם נלחמים בם
against the king of Babylon and	את־מלך בבל
against the Chaldeans	ואת־הכשדים
who are besieging you	הצרים עליכם
outside the walls	מחוץ לחומה
(21:4 MT)	

Similarly in 21:2, where the MT refers to נבוכדראצר מלך־בבל ("Nebuchadrezzar, the king of Babylon"), the LXX has simply βασιλεὺς βαβυλῶνος ("the king of Babylon"). The emphasis in the MT on the figure of Nebuchadrezzar signals that the two kings are polar opposites.

In 21:1-10, where the LXX names the Judean king and omits either the name of the Babylonian king or any reference to him at all, the MT names both Judean and Babylonian kings. One effect of the MT's reading is to highlight the polarity between the figures of the two kings. Another effect, specifically in vv. 3-7, is to heighten the identification between the figure of Nebuchadrezzar and Yhwh. It is not just in the action of waging war against Judah that the figures of the Babylonian king and Yhwh are similar. In 21:3-7 the Babylonian king takes on similar dispositions to those of Yhwh, i.e., a denial of compassion and mercy towards the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The literary technique of overturning Judah's sacred traditions is also found in vv. 8-10, in which there is a parody of the Deuteronomic conception of life. Vv. 8-10 exist in some tension with what precedes.[51] They are addressed to a different audience

---

[50] These differences between the LXX and the MT have been noted by various scholars: e.g., Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 405-406; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 568; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:500-501. In his analysis of these verses, Holladay comments that the MT "has evidently shifted the attention to Nebuchadrezzar" (*ibid.*), but he does not attempt any explanation of the significance of such a shift.

[51] E.g., see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 410-411; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:494; Thiel, *Jeremia 1-25*, 235-236.

ואל־העם הזה ("to this people") than vv. 3-7. The offering of two clear alternatives to the people, the way of life and the way of death, is reminiscent of Deut 30:15-20, where Moses places similar alternatives before the people.[52] In Deut 30:15-20 the way of life is linked to their obedience to the law, the result of which is the promise of progeny and possession of the land. The way of death, the consequence of their refusal to obey the law, leads to dispossession of the land.

However in Jer 21:9 the Deuteronomic way is parodied:

Those who stay in this city	הישב בעיר הזאת
shall die by the sword, by	ימות בחרב
famine, and by pestilence; but	וברעב ובדבר
those who go out and surrender	והיוצא ונפל
to the Chaldeans who are bes-	על־הכשדים הצרים עליכם
ieging you shall live and	יחיה והיתה־לו
shall have their lives as a	נפשו לשלל:
prize of war	
(Jer 21:9 MT)	

The way of life is equated not with progeny and possession of the land, but with surrender to the Babylonians.

Related to the theme of surrender are two instances of irony in vv. 8-10. The first is in the threat that Jerusalem will experience sword, famine and pestilence (v. 9). This is a reversal of the Zion theology with its belief in the divine protection of the city. Yhwh's city will become a place of death! The second is the reference to the survivors who will be spared their lives לשלל ("as a prize of war"). In war booty is usually taken by the victors. In the words of Carroll, "Survival is victory"![53]

While the fate of Jerusalem is in the foreground, Babylon is a background figure. It is represented metonymically by the term הכשדים ("the Chaldeans" – v. 9), and by the figure of its king (v. 10). Their subordinate role in the attack in the threatened destruction of Jerusalem is shown in v. 9, which attributes the destruction to Yhwh. The Babylonian role is referred to only ob-

---

[52] As noted by Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 410; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:503; Thiel, *Jeremia 1-25*, 235. The linking of this choice to a specific situation suggests that the passage is closer to the *Predigt-Alternativ* of the Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic tradition than to that of the wisdom tradition, whose portrayal of the alternatives of life and death is more generalised (again, see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 410; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:503.

[53] Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 411. For a similar view, see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 574.

liquely in v. 10b, by the passive construction ביד מלך־בבל תנתן
ושרפה באש ("it shall be given into the hands of the king of Baby-
lon, and he shall burn it with fire").

In 21:1-10 Babylon is represented primarily by the metonymic
figure of its king, Nebuchadrezzar, and secondarily by the met-
onymic term כשדים ("Chaldeans"). In v. 2 there is the suggestion
of a metaphoric association between Nebuchadrezzar and Sen-
nacherib, an association quickly undermined in vv. 3-7. Where
v. 2 suggests that Yhwh is on the side of Judah in the conflict,
according to vv. 3-7 Yhwh fights with Babylon against Judah.

The action of Yhwh against Jerusalem is depicted as a reversal
of Judah's sacred traditions, the exodus and the holy war. Holy
war imagery has been used earlier in the book to depict Yhwh's
action against Judah (e.g., 1:13-19). The reversal of the exodus
imagery in 21:1-10 is important in our understanding of the fig-
ure of Babylon. Nebuchadrezzar is not to be compared to Pha-
raoh, nor is Babylon here to be equated with Egypt. Yhwh's judg-
ment means that there will be a going out for Judah, not from
Egypt to life in the land, but from Yhwh's presence to death and
captivity.

Nebuchadrezzar conducts Yhwh's war. The identification be-
tween the two is achieved by the use of the verb לחם ("to fight").
Both Nebuchadrezzar and Yhwh fight against Judah. The identi-
fication is more developed by the MT than the LXX. The former
names the Babylonian king where the latter does not. The MT
has Nebuchadrezzar as the subject of a series of verbs, which in
the LXX are constructed with Yhwh as subject. At the same time,
the text clearly subordinates Nebuchadrezzar to Yhwh, as v. 10
indicates.

A final reversal of Judah's traditions is found in vv. 8-10. The
Deuteronomic imperative to choose life or death is used now to
associate death with staying in Jerusalem. Life comes from sur-
render to the Babylonians.

Through the figure of its king Babylon is thus metaphorically
associated with Yhwh, whose partner it is in the attack on Judah.
Babylon is not to be identified either as another Assyria, whose
siege failed, or another Egypt from where Yhwh led out his peo-
ple.

2.3. *Babylon in Jeremiah 24*

Here Babylon is portrayed metonymically by the figure of its king, and as a place both of exile and hope. Judah's future is identified with the community in exile, while the fate of those who remain behind is dispersal and death.

Jeremiah 24 consists of a vision of a basket of figs, some of which are good and the others bad (vv. 1-3). The explanation of the vision identifies the good figs as those whom Nebuchadrezzar exiled in 597, and the bad figs as those who remained behind in the land. There are no grounds given for this judgment.[54]

The first reference to Babylon is in v. 1b. Where 21:1-10 identifies Nebuchadrezzar as Yhwh's agent in the holy war against Jerusalem, chap. 24 identifies him as the agent of Judah's exile. Where v. 1 identifies the exile as the action of Nebuchadrezzar, v. 5 identifies it as the action of Yhwh: כן אכיר את־גלות יהודה אשר שלחתי מן־המקום הזה ארץ כשדים ("so I will regard...the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans"). This continues a process already seen in 20:1-6 and 21:1-10, the linking of the activity of Nebuchadrezzar with that of Yhwh.

As in 21:1-10 the Babylonian king in chap. 24 is a counter-figure to the Judean kings. While the figure of Nebuchadrezzar is linked to that of Yhwh, the Judean kings are judged either negatively or ambiguously.

The judgment on Zedekiah is unambiguously negative, as vv. 8-10 show. In the case of Jeconiah, the judgment is ambiguous, as a comparison of vv. 4-7 and vv. 8-10 shows. In vv. 8-10, a description of punishment, those who are banished and to be killed are identified: את־צדקיהו מלך־יהודה ואת־שריו ואת שארית ירושלם הנשארים בארץ הזאת והישבים בארץ מצרים ("King Zedekiah of Judah, his officials, the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who live in the land of Egypt"). However in vv. 4-7, an oracle of deliverance, those who are to be saved are identified by the generic term גלות יהודה ("the exiles from Judah"—v. 5). The use of such a generic expression gives rise to some ambiguity.

---

[54] For further on the absence of any grounds for judgment, see Nelson Kilpp, *Niederreißen und aufbauen: das Verhältnis von Heilsverheißung und Unheilsverkündigung bei Jeremia und im Jeremiabuch* (Biblisch-theologische Studien 13; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990) 34-35.

On the one hand it is possible that, because the members of the exilic community have been already identified in 24:1, the expression גלות יהודה can be interpreted as inclusive of Jeconiah. On the other hand, in the light of the denunciation of the Judean kings in the chapters immediately preceding, the expression גלות ירושלם signifies the exclusion of Jeconiah from the promise of restoration.

The denunciation of Jeconiah, found in 22:24-30, is part of a larger section, 21:11–23:8, the theme of which is the denunciation of the Judean kings. In 21:11–22:9 there is a series of oracles directed against the Judean kings in general: לבית מלך יהודה ("to the house of the king of Judah" – 22:11; 22:1, 6). Then in 22:7-30, the oracles are directed against specifically named kings: אל־שלם בן־יאשיהו ("concerning Shallum, son of King Josiah" – 22:11; אל־יהויקים בן־יאשיהו ("concerning Jehoiakim, son of King Josiah" – 22:18); כניהו בן־יהויקים ("Coniah [Jeconiah], son of Jehoiakim" – 22:24).

The denunciation of Jeconiah consists of two oracles, 22:24-27 and vv. 28-30. In both he is threatened with exile, the violence of which is reflected in the use of the verb טול *hifil* ("to hurl") in vv. 26 and 28. In vv. 24-27 Nebuchadrezzar is identified as his captor, and by implication Babylon is the place of exile. In vv. 28-30 neither the place nor the agent of exile is identified. However, these verses contain a further threat that Jeconiah's death will mark the end of the Davidic dynasty (v. 30).

Within 21:11–23:8 the only Judean kings who are spoken of favourably are the dead Josiah (22:15-16) and a future ideal king (23:5-6). The latter's reign will eventuate at some undefined time in the future, and will be characterised by the practice of משפט ("justice") and צדקה ("righteousness"). These characteristics mark his reign as the antithesis of the present dynasty, as the oracles in 21:11–22:30 show.[55] So in chaps. 21–24 the only kings who

---

[55] The character of this future king and his reign are vague. Because the promise in 23:5-6 begins with הנה ימים באים ("the days are surely coming"), an expression which can have eschatological significance (so Thiel, *Jeremia 1-25*, 129), the future king and his reign may have messianic significance. This interpretation is supported by the presence of the expression צמח צדיק ("a righteous Branch") in v. 5 and the similarity between 23:5-6 and Isa 11:1. Furthermore, the threat in 22:30 that the death of Jeconiah marks the end of the dynasty also supports this view.

However, there are also indications that the rule of the future king will oc-

appear without any note of condemnation are Josiah and the Babylonian king Nebuchadrezzar, the accomplice of Yhwh in the destruction and exile of Judah.

The second reference to Babylon in chap. 24 occurs in v. 5. While in this verse it is described as the place of exile, it takes on a further significance in the light of vv. 8-10. The punishment of Zedekiah and those left behind after 597 is dispersal and death. The idea of dispersal is in v. 9: בכל־מקמות אשר־אדיחם שם ("in all the places where I shall drive them" – v. 9). In v. 10 there is reference to death by sword, famine and pestilence. The result of the punishment is the end of life in the land: עד־תמם מעל האדמה אשר־נתתי להם ולאבותיהם ("until they are utterly destroyed from the land that I gave to them and their ancestors" – v. 10). The land is now empty of its inhabitants.[56]

The significance of this is that the exiles in Babylon become the foundation of a new community. It is they who will enter the land anew and take possession of it. As a place Babylon is not simply a place of exile, but the place from which the people will enter the land. Babylon is now a metaphor for the future.

Further insight into the function of Babylon can be gained from the reference in vv. 8-10 to Egypt. Amongst those threatened with punishment in these verses is a group who are in Egypt: והישבים בארץ מצרים ("and those who live in the land of Egypt" – v. 8).[57] What is important here is the opposition in the text between Babylon on the one hand, and Judah and Egypt on the other. Those who will enter the land anew are not connected with Egypt but with Babylon. This negative judgment associated with Egypt

---

cur within the framework of history. In the book of Jeremiah the expression הנה ימים באים can refer to a new time within the framework of history and which is completely different in character from what precedes. For this view see e.g., Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 269; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:561; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 147; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 491).

[56] The idea of the empty land as a theological-ideological construct is developed by Robert P. Carroll, "The Myth of the Empty Land," *Semeia* 59 (1992) 79-93.

[57] This threat is consistent with the message of chaps. 42-44 according to which those who were left in Judah after the assassination of Gedaliah in 582 decided to escape to Egypt. Their decision is condemned in a series of oracles delivered by Jeremiah (42:7-22; 43:8-13; 44:1-14). The connection between Jeremiah 24 and 42-44 and the consequent redaction-critical issues have been analysed particularly by Pohlmann *(Studien*, 20-31, 123-181). The issue in the above analysis however is the function of the reference to Egypt within the more immediate context of chaps. 21-24.

continues a process begun in 21:1-10, i.e., the overturning of the exodus traditions. Judah's history in the land will begin again, but not by means of a group who come from Egypt. The entry into the land will now be linked not with deliverance from Egypt, but with the return from Babylon.

The replacement of the Exodus as the story of deliverance by another tradition is more directly expressed in 23:7-8.[58] V. 7 begins with formulaic language used in other parts of the book to signal such an eclipse: לכן הנה־ימים באים נאם־יהוה לא־יאמרו עוד חי־יהוה אשר העלה את־בני ישראל מארץ מצרים ("Therefore, the days are surely coming, says the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, 'As the LORD lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt'").[59] A new *confessio fidei* supersedes the deliverance from Egypt: חי־יהוה אשר העלה ואשר הביא את־זרע בית ישראל מארץ צפונה ומכל הארצות אשר הדחתים שם וישבו על־אדמתם ("'As the LORD lives who brought out and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where I had driven them.' Then they shall live in their own land" – v. 8).[60]

Finally the construction of time in chap. 24 is also significant. Jeremiah's vision occurs after the deportation of 597 and in chap. 24 the exiles of this first deportation are judged favourably, while a negative verdict is put on those who remain behind there in 587. The year 597 then is associated with a future, but only for one particular group. The figure of Babylon is represented in chap. 24 in two distinct ways. It is first represented by Nebuchadrezzar who is identified as Yhwh's accomplice in the event of 597. The

---

[58] Jer 23:1-8 belongs to the body of material framed by 21:1-10 and chap. 24. This material, which consists of oracles addressed to Judah's leadership, falls into two broad sections: oracles about the kingship (21:11–23:8), and oracles about the prophets (23:9-40). While 23:1-8 concludes the section on kingship, its content is quite different to what immediately precedes. The oracles about the kingship are all negative in content, except for 23:1-8. 23:1-8 consists of two oracles of salvation/deliverance (vv. 1-4, 7-8) which enclose an oracle about a future king. The promise of a new king is thus enclosed by two oracles which are about a return from exile.

23:3 speaks of the return as a gathering from diaspora, but 23:7-8 refers to the return quite differently. The promised return will supplant the Exodus.

[59] Other instances of such formulaic language are 3:16-18; 16:14-15; 31:28-29, 30-32. For this, see Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 421. I am dependent on him for this analysis of 23:7-8 (*ibid.*, 360-368).

[60] The term "*confessio fidei*" is used in this context by Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 248.

figure of the Babylonian king also functions as a counter-point to the Judean kings of the time, and he is the only king – apart from the dead Josiah – to be portrayed in a positive light. Babylon is secondly represented in its topography simultaneously as a place of exile and a place of hope. From Babylon will come a new people to again enter and take possession of the land.

2.4. *Conclusion*

As a block of text, chaps. 21–24 is significantly different from what precedes. In these chapters the settings of texts are identified. Places and people are named, something which has occurred earlier in the book only occasionally (1:1-3; 11:21,23; 20:1). Consequently the material in chaps. 21–24 is different in character to what has preceded, and this difference will influence the process of interpretation.

The chapters are characterised by an extensive use of metonymy. The kings of Babylon and Judah are central figures. An identification between Zedekiah and Yhwh is suggested in 21:1-2, but immediately subverted in what follows. The identification of Yhwh with the Babylonian king, already seen in 20:1-6, is intensified, so that Nebuchadrezzar is not like Yhwh just in his actions, but also in his attributes. In chaps. 21–24 the consistently negative evaluation of the Judean kings heightens the standing of Nebuchadrezzar. He is the only king positively evaluated in the chapters.

Babylon is also represented as a place in chaps. 21–24, but its topography is different to that represented in 20:1-6. As in 20:1-6, Babylon in chap. 24 is a place of exile. However where exile to Babylon in 20:1-6 was the fate of all of Judah, in chap. 24 it is the fate of only a section of the community. Where in 20:1-6 Babylon is a place of death for the exiles, in chap. 24 it is a place of hope and new life for the future. There is in this view of Babylon a repudiation of the Exodus traditions. In chaps. 21–24 the story of the deliverance from Pharaoh's Egypt is either dismantled or made obsolete in the following ways: a) the God of the Exodus is now fighting against Jerusalem; b) the word יצא ("to go out") now refers to Judah's entry into captivity; c) Egypt is now a place of punishment and death. The understanding of Egypt as

the place from which Yhwh brought the people to live in the land is now taken over from Babylon.

By way of contrast, in chaps. 21–24 the land is a place of death and destruction. In 21:1-10 Judah's survival comes from surrender to Babylon, while the city of Jerusalem is now a place of death. Similarly in chap. 24 the inhabitants of the land will be banished and exterminated.

3. *Summary*

The figure of Babylon functions in several different ways in chaps. 2–24. Within chaps. 2–20 it functions as an organising metaphor, drawing together into a metaphoric network what are disparate and apparently unconnected metaphors for Yhwh's judgment. Its function in 20:1-6 as a metaphor for landlessness, exile and death points to what follows in chaps. 21–24, where the three themes are further explored. These chapters also introduce the theme of Judah's survival and its future. In chaps. 21–24 Babylon is associated with the future. In chap. 21 survival comes from surrender to the Babylonian king, while in chap. 24 the future belongs to the exiles in Babylon who will at some future time return and repossess the land.

While chaps. 2–24 are predominantly (but not exclusively) negative in their portrayal of Judah, here Babylon is represented positively, especially through the metonymic figure of its king. While the Judean kings are condemned, the figure of Nebuchadrezzar is portrayed in varying degrees of metaphorical identification with Yhwh. Such a portrait points to even more positive evaluations of Babylon in chaps. 27–29. However before a study of these chapters is possible, it is first necessary to take up chap. 25, the conclusion of which marks the major division in the MT of the book.

BABYLON IN JEREMIAH 25 MT

Jeremiah 25 MT is a very important text in this study. Not only are its references to Babylon significant, but so is its position within the book itself. The end of chap. 25 marks the major division in the MT of Jeremiah, while at 25:13 the order of the MT and the LXX differs radically.

A study of Jeremiah 25 MT brings to light two aspects to the figure of Babylon in Jeremiah 25 MT. It is represented in vv. 1-11 as similar to the Babylon of the late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE, the Babylon which was Judah's invader and conqueror. Within the chapter there is a shift from that representation to one in vv. 15-26 where Babylon is a figure which transcends historical settings and geographical boundaries. It is a figure of mystery which cannot be completely identified with any particular nation or land and which cannot be confined to one particular period of history.

In both instances Babylon is a metaphor. In vv. 1-11 it is a metaphor for Yhwh's judgment on Judah. In vv. 15-26 it is a metaphor for the enemy of Yhwh, whose submission is the climax of the divine judgment of the world.

This interpretation is based on a close reading of the present form of the text. The metaphorical dimension of the chapter has not been given sufficient attention in Jeremiah research because most studies of it are text-critical or redaction-critical, and little attention has been given to its final form.[1]

The theme of judgment is central to Jeremiah 25 MT, and the figure of Babylon occurs within this context, initially as the agent and ally of Yhwh in the judgment of Judah (vv. 1-11), and subsequently as an opponent in Yhwh's judgment of the world (vv. 12-

---

[1] The neglect of the chapter's final shape is reflected in the arrangement of Carroll's commentary (cf., his *Jeremiah*, 86-88). He divides the book into part one (Jer 1:1–25:14), part two (25:15-28; chaps. 46–51), part three (26–36), epilogue (52:1-34). A similar presentation of the book's contents is given by Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 1. McKane treats the chapter as four separate units, and does not attend to the chapter's overall shape (*Jeremiah*, 1:618-658).

14, 15-26). There is also another development in the chapter's portrait of Babylon. In vv. 1-14 it is portrayed as a nation and a land. The identification of its king situates it, together with the chapter's superscription, giving it a fictive setting in a particular period of history. In vv. 15-26 Babylon is portrayed as a figure which transcends historical or geographical settings. It is a figure of mystery which cannot be completely identified with any particular nation or land and which cannot be confined to one particular period of history.

Because the chapter is both important for this study and complex, it is necessary to attend to some preliminary steps before an analysis of the figure of Babylon is possible. The first step is a determination of the divisions of Jeremiah 25 MT and its setting within the book. The second is an investigation of the role of metaphor in the chapter's construction of time. These two steps form the foundation for the third, which is the interpretation of the figure of Babylon in the chapter.

1. *Divisions and Setting of Jeremiah 25 MT*

The major divisions of the chapter are: vv. 1-14, which contain a prophetic judgment speech; vv. 15-29, a description of a prophetic symbolic action; vv. 30-38, proclamations of punishment and laments.[2] The theme of judgment is common to each section.

The end of Jeremiah 25 MT marks the major division in the MT of the book, as a number of signals in the text indicate. One is the reference to the prophet's ministry: מן־שלש עשרה שנה ליאשיהו

---

[2] So, Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up*, 212-218; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 490-506; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 664-678; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 509-518. Rudolph divides the chapter into two large sections, vv. 1-14, vv. 15-38, and then further divides vv. 15-38 into two parts, vv. 15-29 and vv. 30-38 (*Jeremia*, 159-168). Cornill also divides the chapter into two large sections, vv. 1-13 and vv. 15-38. He omits v. 14 because it is not found in the LXX (*Jeremia*, 281-286).

Influenced by the question of what is original to the prophet and what is an addition, Weiser also divides the chapter into the same two large sections, but then further divides vv. 15-38 into a series of smaller units (*Jeremia*, 230-231). His divisions do not reflect the connections between these smaller units. For example, he separates vv. 15-16, the vision of the cup, from vv. 17-26, the list of nations who must drink it), and vv. 27-29, a further explanation of the vision (*ibid.*, 231). While these three units may originate from different stages in the book's formation, in the final form of the text they are part of a section formed around the symbol of the cup.

בן־אמון מלך יהודה ועד היום הזה זה שלש עשרים שנה היה דבר־יהוה עלי
("For twenty-three years, from the thirteenth year of King Josiah
son of Amon of Judah, to this day, the word of the LORD has come
to me" – v. 3). This retrospective view of the prophet's ministry is
part of the accusation (vv. 3-7) in a prophetic judgment speech,
in which the prophet's ministry is reviewed as a time in which
Judah persistently rejected Yhwh's message. The history of rejec-
tion becomes the grounds for punishment.

Another signal can be seen in the theme of chap. 25. Initially
about the judgment against Judah and the nations (v. 11), the
theme of the chapter is developed in vv. 9-14 to include the idea
of a divine judgment against Babylon (vv. 12-14). A similar devel-
opment is evident in vv. 15-26, in which the judgment begins with
Judah (v. 18), extends to all the nations (vv. 19-26a) and then is
climaxed by the submission of Babylon (v. 26b). This movement
is presented in a compressed form in v. 29 which begins with a
reference to Yhwh's action against Jerusalem and concludes with
the threat of a world-wide judgment, whose realisation is immi-
nent.

There are also important thematic links between chap. 25 and
chap. 1. What is foreshadowed in chap. 1 is now realised in
chap. 25. In 1:14-19 there is the threat of evil from the north which
takes the form of an invader summoned by Yhwh: הנני קרא
לכל־משפחות ממלכות צפונה ("For now I am calling all the tribes of
the kingdoms of the north" – 1:15). In 25:9 this threat is identi-
fied with Nebuchadrezzar and the Babylonians: הנני שלח ולקחתי
את־כל־משפחות צפון נאם־יהוה ואל־נבוכדראצר מלך־בבל עבדי ("I am go-
ing to send for all the tribes of the north, says the LORD, even for
King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, my servant").

The differences between Jeremiah 25 MT and what follows also
indicate that its conclusion marks a major division in the MT of
the book. Jeremiah 25 MT differs from chap. 26 in form, setting
and content. The latter is a narrative within which is a summons
to repentance (26:3-6). The genres of the prophetic judgment
speech (25:2-14), prophetic symbolic action (vv. 15-29), proph-
etic oracles which contain elements of a theophany (vv. 30-31)
and lament (vv. 32-38) are not in chap. 26. Similarly, the narra-
tive genre, dominant in chap. 26, is not represented in chap. 25
(apart, perhaps, from vv. 15-17).

While both chapters contain a summons to repentance (25:5-

6; 26:4-6), the genre has a different function in the two passages.[3]
25:5-6 is part of the accusation (vv. 3-7) in a prophetic judgment
speech (25:2-14). The summons is presented as an event in the
past. Because of the people's failure to listen to the summons,
they are to be punished. In 26:4-6 the summons is a present event.
As 26:3 indicates, the summons is issued because there is still the
possibility of repentance: אולי ישמעו וישבו איש מדרכו הרעה ("It may
be that they will listen, all of them, and will turn from their evil
way"). The history of a sustained rejection of the prophetic word,
as found in 25:3-7, is absent in Jeremiah 26 MT.[4] The setting of
the two chapters is quite different. Chap. 25 is set in the fourth
year of Jehoiakim (605 BCE), whereas chap. 26 is situated at the
beginning of that king's reign (609 BCE).

Chap. 26 is a narrative of the conflict between Jeremiah and
representatives of the Judean authorities which arose over his an-
nouncement of the impending destruction of the temple. The
content of chap. 25 is quite different. Chap. 25 is about Yhwh's
judgment directed firstly to all of Judah, and then extended to
all the nations. Babylon appears here as the agent of Yhwh's de-
struction of Judah and her neighbours and then as the last of
the nations to submit to the judgment. In contrast, Babylon does
not figure at all in chap. 26.

On the grounds of content and form therefore Jeremiah 25 MT
is considered to be the conclusion in the MT of its first major
section, chaps. 1-25.

2. *Time and Metaphor in Jeremiah 25 MT*

Metaphor is central to the interpretation of Jeremiah 25 MT, and
its chronological references must be interpreted in the first in-
stance against the horizon of metaphor rather than history. Only
after the metaphorical dimension of Jeremiah 25 MT has been
explained is it possible to interpret the figure of Babylon within
the chapter.

---

[3] For the genre of the summons to repentance, see Raitt, *A Theology of Exile*,
37-40.

[4] That chap. 26 marks the beginning of the second half of the book is ar-
gued by Kathleen M. O'Connor, "'Do not Trim a Word': The Contributions of
Chapter 26 to the Book of Jeremiah," *CBQ* 52 (1989) 617-630, esp. 627-628.

A metaphorical interpretation of the construction of time in the chapter is based on three points. The first is the presence of the expression היום הזה (vv. 3, 19), the effect of which is to collapse the temporal distance between particular dates and periods. The second is the presence of the expression בשנה הרבעית ליהויקים ("the fourth year of Jehoiakim" – v. 1), a chronological marker which is itself a metaphor. The third is the presence in the text of שבעים שנה ("seventy years" – vv. 11, 12) and עולם ("everlasting" – vv. 5, 9, 12), expressions which signify a period of time of indefinite duration.

The first point in establishing the metaphorical dimension of the chapter is the significance of the expression היום הזה which occurs first in v. 3: מן־שלש עשרה שנה ליאשיהו בן־אמון מלך יהודה ועד היום הזה ("for twenty-three years, from the thirteenth year of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah, to this day"). V. 3 is part of the accusation in the prophetic judgment speech in which Judah is accused of rejecting Jeremiah's message. According to v. 3 his ministry to this point embraces a twenty-three year period, beginning in the year 627. The term היום הזה then refers to the year 605.[5]

However the term then appears in v. 18:

So I took the cup	ואקח את־הכוס
from the LORD's hand,	מיד יהוה
and made all the nations	ואשקה את־כל־הגוים
to whom the LORD sent me drink it:	אשר שלחני יהוה אליהם:
Jerusalem	את־ירושלם
and the towns of Judah,	ואת־ערי יהודה
its kings and officials,	ואת־מלכיה ואת־שריה
to make them a desolation	לתת אתם לחרבה
and a waste,	לשמה
an object of hissing	לשרקה
and of cursing,	לקללה
as they are today;	כיום הזה:
(vv. 17-18 MT)	

In v. 18 היום הזה is identified with the period of the destruction of Jerusalem. Between vv. 3 and 18 there are no chronological markers that indicate a shift in the setting of the events narrated in the text. The effect of היום הזה in v. 18 is to associate the destruction

---

[5] Following the chronology of Miller and Hayes, *History*, 392.

of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah with the year 605. For obvi-
ous reasons the association between the year 605 and the destruc-
tion of Jerusalem cannot be proposed on historical grounds. In
this sense it is not literally true, but rather is metaphorical.[6]

Another effect of היום הזה is to signify that Jerusalem is still in
a state of destruction. Although the language of exile and depor-
tation is not found in v. 18, the idea of Jerusalem's destruction as
on-going parallels the idea of the unended exile and continued
Babylonian dominance in Jeremiah 1 and 52.[7]

A further effect of היום הזה is that is makes the events repre-
sented in the chapter contemporaneous with the time of the read-
er.[8] Again, there is a parallel with the idea of the unended exile.
Where the framing effect of 1:1-3 and chap. 52 created the fic-
tion that the exile was not yet ended and that the reader belongs
to such a world, the effect of v. 18 on the reader is to similarly
project a world in which Jerusalem is still destroyed and Babylon
is dominant.

The second point in establishing the metaphorical dimension
of the chapter is the significance of the chronological marker
בשנה הרבעית ליהויקים ("the fourth year of Jehoiakim" – v. 1), which
is a metaphor for Yhwh's judgment.[9] As a chronological marker
it is part of the superscription for Jeremiah 25 MT:

The word that came to Jeremiah	הדבר אשר־היה על־ירמיהו
concerning all the people of	על־כל־עם יהודה
Judah, in the fourth year of	בשנה הרבעית ליהויקים
King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of	בן־יאשיהו מלך יהודהבשנה
Judah (25:1a MT)	

---

[6] The reference in v. 18 to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah as in ruins כיום
הזה ("today") has been seen as a reference to the events of 587 (e.g., by Holla-
day, *Jeremiah 1*, 673). However the construction of time in the chapter is gov-
erned by the superscription, which situates the narrative in the fourth year of
Jehoiakim. The chronological references in v. 3 come closer to a synchronisa-
tion with the year 605 than with the year 587: מן־שלש עשרה שנה ליאשיהו...ועד
היום הזה שלש ועשרים שנה ("For twenty-three years, from the thirteenth year of
King Josiah... to this day").

Thompson says that the expression כיום הזה refers to the time of the compo-
sition of the text (*Jeremiah*, 516).

[7] See above, 25-34.

[8] I am indebted to Professor Robert Carroll for this suggestion.

[9] As recognised by Taylor, upon whose study I am in part dependent here
(Marion Ann Taylor, "Jeremiah 45: The Problem of Placement," *JSOT* 37 [1987]
79-98).

On the collapse or suspense of the literal as a condition for the emergence
of metaphor, see 14-16 above.

A metaphorical interpretation of בשנה הרבעית ליהויקים can be jus-
tified by examining its meaning in chaps. 36 MT and 45 MT, where
it is also a part of the respective superscriptions (36:1 MT; 45:1
MT) and where it also has a metaphorical significance. On the
basis of three important similarities between these chapters and
chap. 25 MT, it will be proposed that בשנה הרבעית ליהויקים is also
a metaphor in the latter. The similarities are: a) chaps. 25, 36 and
45 all mark the end of a section in the book; b) the absence of
chronological order is common to their setting; c) they all refer
to Yhwh's judgment. Our analysis begins with chap. 45 and then
proceeds to chap. 36.

Chap. 45, which is about Yhwh's promise of protection to Baruch,
concludes a section of the book, as is often recognised.[10] It is fol-
lowed by the oracles against the nations (chaps. 46-51) which
contain material whose interests are very different from what pre-
cedes. Its function as a conclusion is also signalled by its focus
on the figure of Baruch. The chapter reflects a shift in the focus
of the tradition from the figure of Jeremiah to that of Baruch,
who becomes the carrier of the prophetic message.

The allusions in chap. 45 to Jeremiah's prophetic ministry sup-
port this interpretation. Baruch complains to Yhwh in language
similar to that found in the confessions: אוי־נא לי כי־יסף יהוה יגון
על־מכאבי יגעתי באנחתי ומנוחה לא מצאתי ("Woe is me! The LORD has
added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning, and I
find no rest" – v. 3). אוי־נא לי ("woe is me") is in 15:10; מכאב ("pain")
is represented in 15:18 by its cognate כאב, and in 20:18 by יגון

("sorrow").[11] The word string בנה ("to build"), הרס ("to break down"), נטע ("to plant") and נחש ("to pluck up"), found frequently in other places in the book is also in 45:4.[12] It points back to 1:10 and Jeremiah's call narrative. The significance of the link with 1:10 is that the prophetic message will be kept alive by Baruch, to whom a promise of survival is given in 45:5: ונתתי לך את־נפשך לשלל על כל־המקמות אשר תלך־שם ("but I will give you your life as a prize of war in every place to which you may go").[13]

Like chap. 25 MT, chap. 45 is set in a part of the book in which there is no discernible chronological order. What precedes chap. 45 is the account of the siege and fall of Jerusalem, the situation of life in Judah after 587, and the escape of a section of the Judean community to Egypt after the assassination of Gedaliah in 582 (chaps. 37–44). Jeremiah goes with the community to Egypt. He is now off the scene, and Baruch becomes the bearer of the prophetic message. While the shift to the figure of Baruch fits well as the consequence of Jeremiah's departure to Egypt, a setting of the year 605 breaks the chronological sequence established in chaps. 37-44. Furthermore, there is also nothing within chap. 45 itself which requires a setting in the year 605. The function of בשנה הרבעית ליהויקים is clearly not chronological.

In the absence of the demands of chronological order other grounds can be considered to explain the position of chap. 45 within the book. The chapter forms an appropriate conclusion to chaps. 37–44 MT because it contains the theme of judgment. Chap. 44 is not only the end of the narrative about the aftermath of 587, but also predicts the end of the community in Egypt. Its concluding note of threat (vv. 26-30) connects well with the promise of judgment in chap. 45.

Like chap. 25 MT, chap. 45 refers to Yhwh's judgment on all the nations: הנני מביא רעה על־כל־בשר ("for I am going to bring disaster upon all flesh" – 45:5). Yhwh's judgment against all the world is a theme extensively developed in two sections of chap. 25, vv. 15-29 and vv. 30-38.

The expression בשנה הרבעית יהויקים in 45:1 MT is the superscrip-

---

[11] As noted by Taylor, *ibid.*, 88 n. 52.

[12] Other occurrences are in 1:10; 24:6; 31:28; 42:10

[13] On the Jeremiah-Baruch relationship, see especially Christopher R. Seitz, "The Prophet Moses and the Canonical Shape of Jeremiah," *ZAW* 101 (1989) 17; Taylor, "Jeremiah 45," 88-89.

tion of a chapter which concludes a major section of the book. The presence of בשנה הרבעית יהויקים as the superscription is accounted for not by reason of chronological order but of thematic continuity. Chap. 45 forms an appropriate conclusion to chaps. 37–44, because it deals with Yhwh's judgment, a theme foreshadowed by the presence of בשנה הרבעית יהויקים in its superscription. An understanding of the function of בשנה הרבעית יהויקים in 45:1 MT is important for interpreting its function in 25:1 MT because of the similarities between the two chapters. Both conclude major sections of the book; the position of both in the book cannot be accounted for on the grounds of chronological order; and common to both is the theme of Yhwh's judgment.

The expression בשנה הרבעית יהויקים is also the superscription to chap. 36, where it has a metaphorical significance similar to that in 45:1 MT. Chap. 36 portrays the rejection of the prophetic word by Jehoiakim who burns the scroll containing the oracles of the prophet against Judah (vv. 4-26). According to the world of the text in chap. 36, the destruction of the scroll signifies the definitive rejection of prophetic message, and the inevitability of punishment (vv. 27-31).

An examination of בשנה הרבעית יהויקים in 36:1 MT is relevant because of the similarities between chaps. 36 MT and 25 MT. Both conclude major sections of the book; the position of both in the book cannot be accounted for on the grounds of chronological order; and common to both is the theme of Yhwh's judgment.

Like chaps. 25 and 45, chap. 36 represents the end of a section of the book. What follows in chaps. 37–44 is also quite different in character from what precedes in chap. 36. Where chaps. 26–36 contain predominantly homiletic material set within a narrative framework, chaps. 37–44 are predominantly narrative with some homiletical material. Chaps. 37–44 narrate the fall of Jerusalem in 587 and its aftermath. References to the Egyptian Pharaoh in 37:5 and 44:30 frame chaps. 37–44, as does the figure of Baruch in chaps. 36 and 45.[14] Chap. 36 also marks an end of a phase in the proclamation of the prophetic message, as the role of Jere-

---

[14] Perdue, *The Collapse of History*, 248. Chaps. 37-44 are also seen as separate from chaps. 26-36 by Peter R. Ackroyd, "Historians and Prophets," *Studies in the Religious Tradition of the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1987) 138-139; Brueggemann, *To Build, To Plant*, 121; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 509-510; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 22-23.

miah in the chapter indicates. In the early verses he is the focus of attention as he dictates the scroll (vv. 4-8), but then he fades from the scene as the scroll occupies centre stage. In vv. 20-26 the prophetic message is announced without Jeremiah's presence or intervention. The chapter ends with the writing of another scroll. A shift happens in the chapter from the person of the prophet to the written word.[15] Chap. 36 ends a section of the book which begins with chap. 26. Together these two chapters frame the material in chaps. 27–35.

The similarities between chaps. 26 and 36 support this interpretation.[16] Both are set in the reign of Jehoiakim (26:1; 36:1). Both contain a commission for the prophet to announce his message in the temple (26:2; 36:5). The purpose of his preaching is to call the people to repentance (26:3; 36:3). Nothing of the prophetic message is to be omitted (26:2; 36:2). In both narratives the prophet has supporters and protectors. In chap. 26 these are Ahikam (v. 24), and unnamed elders (v. 17), princes and people (v. 16). In chap. 36, his protectors are mentioned collectively without name (vv. 11, 19) and some individually by name (vv. 12, 14). In both chapters Jehoiakim is portrayed as rejecting the prophetic message (26:20-24; 36:23-25).

There is also a difference in perspective between the two chapters, particularly in regard to the theme of repentance. In chap. 26 the purpose of the preaching here is the repentance of the people: אולי ישמעו וישבו איש מדרכו ("It may be that they will listen, all of them, and turn from their evil way" – 26:3). However in chap. 36 there is a shift, not found in chap. 26, from the preaching of repentance to the announcement of judgment. Initially the perspective of chap. 36 on the people's repentance is the same as that in chap. 26. Both 26:3 and 36:3 express the hope that the preaching of the prophet will lead to Judah's repentance.[17] The shift in chap. 36 comes with the burning of the scroll by Jehoiakim,

---

[15] So, Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 662-663; Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, 50-51; Seitz, "The Prophet Moses and the Canonical Shape of Jeremiah," 18.

[16] For what follows, see O'Connor, "Chapter 26," 625-627.

[17] 36:3 reads: אולי ישמעו בית יהודה את כל-הרעה אשר אנכי חשב לעשות להם למען ישובו איש מדרכו הרעה ("It may be that when the house of Judah hears of all the disasters that I intend to do, all of them may turn from their evil ways"). 36:7 is similar: אולי תפל תחנתם לפני יהוה וישבו איש מדרכו הרעה ("It may be that their plea will come before the LORD and they will turn from their evil ways").

an event which sets the scene not only for the writing of another
scroll but for an oracle of doom (vv. 27-31). At the end of chap.
36, Judah's fate is sealed and there is no offer of repentance.[18]

Like that of chaps. 25 and 45, the placement of chap. 36 is not
according to a chronological sequence. While the superscription
in 35:1 reads בימי יהויקים ("in the days of Jehoiakim"), the events
of chap. 34 are set in the days of Zedekiah, as those of chaps. 32–
33.[19] Furthermore, as with chap. 45, the relationship between and
בשנה הרבעית ליהויקים and the contents of chap. 36 are not clear.
The proclamation in chap. 36 of inevitable doom for Judah is seen
by some as a natural consequence of the Babylonian victory at
Carchemish. The previously unidentified threat from the north
is now realised by Babylon's recently won dominance of the re-
gion.[20] At the same time, such a view of Babylon's position in Pal-
estine has not gone unchallenged, and it is problematic if the
battle of Carchemish did establish complete control for Babylon
in the area. [21]

Like chaps. 25 and 45, chap. 36 is also concerned with Yhwh's
judgment. Like 25:3 it has a retrospective view of the prophet's
preaching (36:2).[22] It too sees Jeremiah's message as directed not
just to Judah, but to the nations also (36:3). As in 25:4-7 Yhwh's
word is rejected. The scroll is written in the hope that its mes-
sage will lead to repentance (vv. 3, 7). However the narrative de-
scribes how it is then cut into pieces and burnt by the king, an
action which symbolises the rejection of the message (vv. 20-26).
The chapter concludes with an oracle of doom. Time has run out.

---

[18] As noted by Martin Kessler, "Form-Critical Suggestions on Jer 36" CBQ 28
(1966) 392; Nicholson, Preaching to the Exiles, 107.

[19] The lack of any chronological arrangement in chaps. 26–36 is apparent
from their superscriptions: בראשית ממלכות יהויקם ("at the beginning of the reign
of Jehoiakim" – 26:1); בראשית ממלכות צדקיהו ("in the beginning of the reign of
Zedekiah" – 27:1); בשנה ההיא בראשית ממלכות צדקיה ("in that same year, at the begin-
ning of the reign of Zedekiah" – 28:1); בשנת העשרית לצדקיהו ("in the tenth year of
Zedekiah" – 32:1); בימי יהויקים ("in the days of Jehoiakim – 35:1); בשנה ליהויקים
הרביעה ("in the fourth year of Jehoiakim" – 36:1).

For the reading of 27:1 as בראשית ממלכות לצדקיהו, see below, 128.

[20] Among those who hold this view are Bright, Jeremiah, 181-182; Holladay,
Jeremiah 2, 255; Thompson, Jeremiah, 620.

[21] For this, see the careful and detailed analysis of Christopher R. Seitz, The-
ology in Conflict: Reactions to Exile in the Book of Jeremiah (BZAW 176; Berlin/New
York: de Gruyter, 1989) 86-91.

[22] As noted by Thiel, Jeremia 1-25, 270-271.

A chance has been given and now rejected; there only remains
the punishment.[23]

The rejection of the prophetic word by Jehoiakim is followed
by the realisation of God's judgment in chaps. 37–44. The arrange-
ment, in which the events of 587 (chap. 37) immediately follow
events set in the year 605 collapses the distance for the reader
between the two dates. The juxtaposition of material set in the
year 605 with that set around 587 is analogous to what happens
in chap. 25 MT, where the distance between these two dates is
also collapsed. While at the historical level a cause-and-effect re-
lationship between the events of 605 and those of 587 could be
contested, at the literary level it cannot be disputed. Jehoiakim's
rejection of the prophetic word in 605 leads to the events of 587.
Chap. 36 thus concludes the section of the book which begins in
chap. 26. The rejection of the prophetic word by Jehoiakim in
chap. 36 is followed by the realisation of God's judgment in chaps
37–44.

The purpose of the preceding analysis of chaps. 45 MT and 36
MT was to show that the temporal indicator בשנה הרבעית ליהויקים
(36:1; 45:1) is a metaphor for Yhwh's judgment. This analysis forms
the basis for a similar metaphorical interpretation for the expres-
sion in 25:1 MT. Chaps. 45 MT and 36 MT are of relevance be-
cause of important similarities between them and chap. 25 MT.
All three conclude major sections of the book; their position in
the book cannot be accounted for on the grounds of chronolog-
ical order; and common to all is the theme of Yhwh's judgment.
These factors, together with the collapse of a coherent chrono-
logical framework in the chapter, support the interpretation of
the temporal indicator בשנה הרביעת ליהויקים in 25:1 MT as a meta-
phor for Yhwh's judgment.

The third point which establishes a metaphorical dimension
to Jeremiah 25 MT is the metaphorical significance of the tem-
poral indicator such as שבעים שנה ("seventy years"), especially when
it is considered in connection with the term עולם ("everlasting").[24]

---

[23] According to von Rad the writing of the scroll "was a final attempt to move
Israel to repentance, and so to make it possible for Jahweh to forgive her" (*Old
Testament Theology*, 2:44).

[24] Ackroyd calls it a "conventional number" (*Exile and Restoration*, 240 n. 27).
He cites passages such as Judg 9:2; 2 Kings 10:7; Isa 23:15 and Ps 90:10 to sup-
port his interpretation. A metaphorical interpretation is also proposed by Brueg-

שבעים שנה occurs in 25:11 and 12, where in both places it refers to the length of Babylon's domination: ועבדו הגוים האלה את־מלך בבל שבעים שנה והיה כמלאות שבעים שנה אפקד על־מלך־בבל ("and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon" – vv. 11b-12a). Besides being found in chap. 25, it also occurs in 29:10: כי לפי מלאת לבבל שבעים שנה אפקד אתכם ("only when Babylon's seventy years are completed, I will visit you"). It indicates a period of time of indefinite duration. Seventy years is used to indicate a period which is of unknown length but at the same time finite.

The use of עולם ("everlasting") also points to a metaphorical meaning of שבעים שנה. 25:9 describes Yhwh's action, carried out by the Babylonians, against Judah and her neighbours: והחרמתים ושמתים לשמה ולשרקה ולחרבות עולם ("I will utterly destroy them, and make them an object of horror and of hissing, and everlasting desolations"). The word עולם, which describes the duration of the desolation caused by the Babylonian action, refers to a period of indefinite duration.[25] In v. 12 עולם describes the duration of Babylon's desolation: ושמתי אתו לשממות עולם ("making the land an everlasting waste"). In v. 5 it signifies the duration of Israel's possession of the land: האדמה אשר נתן יהוה לכם ולאבותיכם למן־עולם ועד־עולם ("the land that the LORD has given to you and your ancestors from of old and forever"). In this context, עולם and שנה שבעים function together to indicate a finite but indefinite period of time, whose exact duration is not revealed. As the context of 25:9 shows, the term is not to be understood literally.

There is then in Jeremiah 25 MT a metaphorical dimension to the chapter's chronological framework, which cannot be coher-

---

gemann, *To Pluck Up, To Tear Down*, 214; Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 480-482; Lester L. Grabbe, "'The End of the Desolations of Jerusalem': From Jeremiah's 70 Years to Daniel's 70 Weeks of Years," *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownlee* (eds. Craig A. Evans, William F. Stinespring; Atlanta: Scholars, 1987) 67; Rietzschel, *Urrolle*, 37; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 161; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 513-514; Christian Wolff, *Jeremia im Frühjudentum und Urchristentum* (TU 118; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976) 101-102.

[25] So, *BDB*, 762-763. The finite meaning of עולם is represented in 1 Sam 27:12, according to which Achish makes David his servant for life – והיה לי לעבד עולם ("he shall always be my servant"). Gesenius offers the following as a meaning for עולם: "the beginning or end of which is either uncertain or else not defined" (S. Tregelles, *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980] 612).

ently interpreted from an historical point of view. The chapter's
superscription contains the temporal indicator בשׁנה הרבעית ליהויקים
("the fourth year of Jehoiakim"), which is a metaphor for the theme
of Yhwh's judgment. The expression שׁבעים שׁנה ("seventy years")
is itself a metaphor, and its presence in combination with the term
עולם ("everlasting") adds to the chapter's metaphorical dimension.
Furthermore this is enhanced by the term היום הזה ("this day"),
which collapses the distance between the year 605 and the de-
struction of Jerusalem, and also makes the events of the chapter
contemporaneous with the time of the reader.

A study of the figure of Babylon must be situated in such a
context. The superscription of Jeremiah 25 MT foreshadows the
chapter's central theme, the judgment of Yhwh. According to the
world of the text Jerusalem is in ruins and not yet restored, and
Babylon is still dominant. All this is associated with the year 605,
and yet the desolation is not yet ended. The world of chap. 25 is
the world of Yhwh's judgment with which the figure of Babylon
is caught up.

3. *Babylon in Jeremiah 25 MT*

The most significant feature about Babylon in Jeremiah 25 MT is
the shift in how it is represented. In vv. 1-14 MT it is represented
as a figure which closely resembles the historical Babylon of the
late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE. The shift is from that
to a figure of mystery whose links with any historical period or
geographical location have been severed. At the end of Jeremiah
25 MT the representation of Babylon has a stereotypical quality
about it. Babylon is the archetypal enemy, the evil empire which
ultimately will be conquered by God.[26] Again it is important to
recognise that this interpretation is based on an investigation of
the literary dynamics of the present form of the text. Studies of
Jeremiah 25 MT which are based on a preference for the LXX as
the superior text or which concentrate only on redactional issues
have not given sufficient weight to the present form of the text.

The figure of Babylon in Jeremiah 25 MT is portrayed within
the context of Yhwh's judgment, the central theme of the chap-

---

[26] As represented in e.g., Revelation 18.

ter. In vv. 1-14 MT its attack on Judah becomes the metaphor for the judgment. Within these verses there is however a secondary shift in how Babylon is portrayed. In vv. 1-11 the agent of Yhwh's judgment against Judah, Babylon is then portrayed in vv. 12-14 as also having to undergo judgment. Babylon shifts from a figure associated with Yhwh and opposed to Judah to a figure associated with Judah and opposed to Yhwh.

The opposition between Yhwh and Babylon is continued in vv. 15-29, in which there is the major shift in the latter's representation. Although Babylon is mentioned here only once and then by the cipher שֵׁשַׁךְ ("Sheshach"), it occupies a central position in these verses.

There are then four parts to the analysis of Babylon in Jeremiah 25 MT. The first takes up vv. 1-14 MT; the second compares vv. 1-14 MT with vv. 1-13 LXX; the third takes up vv. 15-29 MT; the fourth is a summary. Each part will be taken up in turn.

3.1. *Babylon in Vv. 1-14 MT*

The figure of Babylon in vv. 1-14 closely resembles the historical Babylon of the late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE which invaded and conquered Judah. In vv. 1-11 the former is closely identified with Yhwh's purposes and its conquest is a metaphor for the divine judgment against the latter. In vv. 12-14 Babylon is identified with Judah. It is condemned on the same grounds and must undergo the same judgment. Instead of being aligned with Yhwh and opposed to Judah, it is now aligned with Judah and opposed to Yhwh.

Babylon is represented in vv. 1-14 predominantly by the figure of its king. He is portrayed as having control over Judah's destiny as the regnal citation in v. 1 indicates. The designation of Nebuchadrezzar by Yhwh as עַבְדִּי ("my servant" – v. 9) makes him a figure of extremely high standing. Besides identifying him as Yhwh's partner in the war against Judah, the designation of a foreign king as עַבְדִּי also points to Yhwh's abandonment of the Davidic dynasty. Moreover, the designation of a foreign king with such a significant term from Judah's sacred traditions also brings about a further metaphorical association of Babylon with Judah, beyond that established by their common fate at the hands of Yhwh

Vv. 1-14 contain a prophetic judgment speech. V. 2 is the in-

troduction; vv. 3-7 the reason in summary form; v. 8a the messen-
ger formula; vv. 8b-13 announcement of judgment against Judah,
other nations and Babylon. As a prophetic judgment speech vv.
2-14 represent a modification of the genre in two ways. First, there
is the framing of the accusation in generalised rather than spe-
cific terms. Second, there is the shift that occurs in the address-
ee of the speech, which is initially directed against Judah and Jerus-
alem (v. 2), but subsequently embraces Judah's neighbours (v. 8)
and finally Babylon (vv. 12-14).[27]

In Jeremiah 25 MT Babylon is initially portrayed as the domi-
nant power in Judah's affairs. This is the function of the regnal
citation of Nebuchadrezzar in v. 1:

in the fourth year	בשנה הרבעית ליהויקים
of King Jehoiakim	בן־יאשיהו מלך יהודה
son of Josiah of Judah	היא השנה
(that was the first year of	הראשנית
King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon	לנבוכדראצר מלך בבל
(25:1 MT)	

The regnal citation in 25:1 is one of several in the book which
refer to a foreign king. The other instances are in 32:1 MT and
52:12. The literary significance of such citations now needs to be
explored.

The function of the regnal citation of a foreign ruler is to sig-
nify that Judah is in a state of subjugation. It is therefore more
than simply a mechanism which situates an event at a fixed point

---

[27] For Westermann the generalising of the accusation represents the break-
down of the basic form of the prophetic judgment speech (Claus Westermann,
Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech [London: Lutterworth, 1967] 206). According to
his analysis of this passage, the elements of the prophetic judgment speech can
be seen in these verses as follows: vv 1-2, introduction; vv 3-7, reason; v 8a, mes-
senger formula; vv 8b-11, 13, announcement of judgment. His analysis requires
modification here because he omits vv. 12 and 14 from his considerations (*ibid.*,
206-207).

Nicholson sees vv. 4-11 as patterned on 2 Kings 17:13ff. (*Preaching to the Ex-
iles*, 55-57). There is however a notable difference between 2 Kings 17:13ff. and
Jer 25:4-11. The former uses predominantly third person speech to describe the
threat of divine punishment, whereas the latter uses first person speech. The
use of לכן ("therefore") to introduce the announcement of judgment (v. 8a)
further supports the claim that Jer 25:1-14 is better classified as a prophetic judg-
ment speech. It may be further noted that Nicholson does not give an examina-
tion of the whole passage. Rietzschel also analyses only parts of the passage. He
finds a *Scheltrede* in an original kernel of vv. 3-7 (viz., vv. 3, 5, 7). Vv. 8-11 are
regarded as a *Drohrede*, and vv. 12-14 as later additions (*Urrolle*, 29-42).

in time.[28] The citations in 32:1 MT and 52:12 share an important common feature: both refer to the events of 587. Chap. 32 MT is a narrative which describes how Jeremiah is commanded to buy the field at Anathoth, an event which symbolises the future restoration of the community. The regnal citation in v. 1 reads: בשנת העשרית לצדקיהו מלך יהודה היא השנה שמנה־עשרה שנה לנבוכדראצר ("in the tenth year of King Zedekiah of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar"). The setting is made more specific in v. 2: ואז חיל מלך בבל צרים על־ירושלם ("at that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem"). The siege is a situation which Nebuchadrezzar the foreign king controls.

52:12 belongs to the narrative of Nebuchadrezzar's siege and eventual capture of Jerusalem (52:1-29). V. 12 situates the fall of the city: ובחדש החמישי בעשור לחדש היא שנת תשע־עשרה שנה למלך נבוכדראצר מלך־בבל ("In the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon"). Again, at this point, it is the foreign king who is in control. An examination of similar citations elsewhere in the OT confirms the interpretation above.

The first regnal citation of a foreign ruler in the books of Kings is in 2 Kings 24:12, which refers to the surrender of Jehoiachin to Nebuchadrezzar in 597: ויקח אתו מלך בבל בשנת שמנה למלכו ("The king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign").[29] What follows in vv. 13-17 is a description of Nebuchadrezzar's sack of the city, deportation of exiles to Babylon, and his installation of Mattaniah as king. It is particularly significant not only that Mattaniah has his name changed to Zedekiah, but that it is done by Nebuchadrezzar. The actions of the Babylonian king in vv. 13-17 are the actions of the one who has power. The next regnal citation is in 25:8, which is a parallel verse to Jer 52:12 and refers to the events of 587. Within the latter chapters of 2 Kings then, the regnal citation of a foreign ruler signals the shift in power which occurred with the first siege of Jerusalem in 597.

The regnal citations of foreign kings are also found in the

---

[28] As is recognised by Mark O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment* (OBO 92; Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1989) 273 n. 1. However, as he does this only by way of a footnote, it is necessary here to address the issue in more detail.

[29] That 2 Kings 24:12 is the first regnal citation of a foreign ruler in the books of Kings is noted by Gray, *I & II Kings*, 759-760. However he does not however develop the significance of his observation.

post-exilic books of Zechariah and Haggai. An examination of these will confirm our understanding of such citations. The book of Haggai begins: בשנת שתים לדריוש המלך בחדש הששי ביום אחד לחדש ("In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month" – 1:1; also v. 15). What is significant is the unqualified designation in both 1:1 and 1:15 of Darius simply as המלך ("the king"). Zech 7:1 also refers to Darius by the same un-qualified designation: ויהי בשנת ארבע לדריוש המלך ("In the fourth year of King Darius").

The regnal citations in Hag 1:1, 15 and Zech 7:1 do not sim-ply establish historical settings. They also identify who has power at a particular time and place. As Petersen says, the citations in-dicate that "*the* king is not a Davidide but is rather a foreigner".[30] In 25:1 MT the function of the regnal citation of the Babylonian king is to signal that he, and not Jehoiakim, controls Judah's des-tiny.[31]

The image of Babylon as dominant is continued in 25:9 MT:

I am going to send	הנני שלח ולקחתי
for all the tribes of the	את־כל־משפחות צפון
north, says the LORD,	נאם־יהוה
even for King Nebuchadrezzar	ואל־נבוכדראצר
of Babylon, my servant,	מלך־בבל עבדי
and I will bring them against	והבאתים
this land and its inhabitants,	על־הארץ הזאת ועל־ישביה
and against all these nations	ועל כל־הגוים האלה סביב
around;	
(Jer 25:9a MT)	

V. 9 begins the announcement of punishment in the prophetic judgment speech, which is directed against Judah and its neigh-bours. The attack is the work of Yhwh, as the use of צפון ("north") indicates.[32]. Babylon is represented by the figure of its king. The expression נאם־יהוה ("says the LORD") identifies Nebuchadrezzar as the agent of Yhwh's judgment, an understanding of the Baby-lonian king seen already in 21:1-10.

The designation of the Babylonian king as עבדי ("my servant") is both surprising and significant, but its importance has not been

---

[30]   David L. Petersen, *Haggai & Zechariah 1-8* (OTL; London: SCM, 1984) 282.
[31]   Nötscher also makes a passing comment to this effect (Friedrich Nötscher, *Das Buch Jeremia* [Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments 7,2; Bonn: Hanstein, 1934] 187.
[32]   For צפון as signifying divine origin, see above, 63-71.

fully appreciated.[33] There are in the OT only a few figures desig-
nated as servants of Yhwh. Apart from the general designation of
the prophets as Yhwh's servants in the Deuteronomistic tradition,
the epithet is restricted to figures such as Abraham (Gen 26:24),
Moses (Num 12:7); David (e.g., 2 Sam 3:18; 7:5, 8).[34]

Nebuchadrezzar is also represented as similar to Joshua, who
is designated as עבד יהוה (Josh 24:29). Besides designation as
serveants of Yhwh, what they have in common is that they both
carry out Yhwh's war of extermination. Nebuchadrezzar does this
in Jer 21:1-8, and his action against Judah is similarly described
in 25:9 MT, as the use of חרם hifil indicates: והחרמתים ושמתים לשמה
ולשרקה ולחרבות עולם ("I will utterly destroy them, and make them
an object of horror and of hissing, and an everlasting disgrace").[35]
In the conquest of the land described in the book of Joshua, Joshua
himself is portrayed as engaging in wars of extermination, as the

---

[33] For example, Zevit has argued that the term עבד simply means that Neb-
uchadrezzar is Yhwh's vassal, and fulfils the vassal's duty of placing his army at
the disposal of his lord (Ziony Zevit, "The Use of עבד as a Diplomatic Term in
Jeremiah," *JBL* 88 [1969] 74-77). His conclusion is based on various instances in
Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic and Hebrew texts, where עבד or its equivalent clearly
indicates a vassal relationship. However he does not give sufficient weight to the
occurrences of עבדי within the OT.

Because the figures in the OT who are designated עבדי are exemplars of righ-
teousness and fidelity, it could be concluded that in Jer 25:9 MT these attributes
are associated with the Babylonian king. This is the view of Lemke who points to
OT traditions such as Dan 4:34-35, in which Nebuchadrezzar is portrayed as a
believer in Yhwh (Werner E. Lemke, "Nebuchadrezzar, my Servant," *CBQ* 28 [1966]
45-50). He proposes that these traditions found in the book of Daniel are the
reason for a later editor of Jeremiah MT giving Nebuchadrezzar the designation
of עבדי (*ibid.*, 50).

Lemke's conclusion may well be acceptable within the framework of studies
of the book's compositional history. However within the world of the text, there
is no suggestion that Nebuchadrezzar is a believer in Yhwh.

Lemke's view is rejected by Overholt, who argues that Nebuchadrezzar's func-
tion as עבד does not require belief in Yhwh ("King Nebuchadnezzar," 39-48).

[34] These instances are noted by Cross in his discussion of the Deuteronomists
and the kingship (Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in
the History of the Religion of Israel* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973]
251 n. 140).

[35] The allusion in 25:9 MT to Yhwh's wars of extermination is recognised by
Bright, *Jeremiah*, 160; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 492; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 668; Thomp-
son, *Jeremiah*, 513; Weiser, *Jeremia*, 224-225. Holladay sees the campaign of exter-
mination in 25:9 MT as similar to that in Deut 13:16, which allows for the com-
plete destruction of an Israelite city on the grounds of its idolatry (*ibid.*). On the
war of extermination in Deut 13:16, see Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 236-237; Jeffrey H.
Tigay, *Deuteronomy: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (The
JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996) 135.

action against Jericho illustrates: ויחרימו את־כל־אשר בעיר מאיש ועד־אשה
מנער ועד־זקן ועד שור ושה וחמור לפי־חרב ("Then they devoted to
destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men
and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys" – Josh
6:21).[36]

The designation of Nebuchadrezzar as עבדי in Jer 25:9 MT points
back to 21:1-7, in which he also carries out Yhwh's war against
Judah. The designation also links Nebuchadrezzar with David, thus
adding another dimension to the Babylonian king's portrait. The
passage in which David is designated עבדי shed further light on
the meaning of the term in Jer 25:9 MT.

The passages in which עבדי is used of David share a common
feature. Each deals with the Davidic dynasty, either with its estab-
lishment or its continuity. 2 Sam 3:18 belongs to the narrative which
describes the effective capitulation of Abner to David, an action
which secured the kingship for the latter. In v. 21 Abner calls David
אדני המלך ("my lord the king"), an expression of submission. In
the context of David's accession to the throne, Abner refers to
Yhwh's promise about David: ביד דוד עבדי הושיע את־עמי ישראל
("through my servant David I will save my people Israel"). 2 Sam
3:21 points to the promise in 2 Samuel 7 in which David's dynas-
ty is guaranteed by Yhwh, and where the epithet עבדי is twice used
of David (vv. 5, 8). What is common to both passages is the insti-
tution of the Davidic dynasty.

David is also designated עבדי in 1 Kings 11:13, 32, 34, 38. The
context is the continuity of the dynasty. In 11:9-13 the disintegra-
tion of a united Israel is predicted. Within this oracle of disaster,
a promise is also made to Solomon that the dynasty will survive:
רק את־כל־הממלכה לא אקרע שבט אחד אתן לבנך למען דוד עבדי למען
ירושלם אשר בחרתי ("I will not, however, tear away the entire king-
dom; I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of my servant
David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen" –
v. 13). The reason for the disintegration of the united kingdom
is the sin of Solomon, a theme central to vv. 31-39, in which Dav-
id is referred to three times as עבדי (vv. 32, 34, 38). A difference
between v. 11 and vv. 31-39 is that in the latter, David as עבדי is
also someone who faithfully obeyed Yhwh's commandments. In

---

[36] For other instances of חרם hifil ("to utterly destroy") in the campaigns of
Joshua, see Josh 8:26; 10:28, 35, 37; 11:11, 12, 20, 21.

this way he is a counter figure to Solomon. What guarantees the dynasty in spite of Solomon's infidelity to Yhwh is David and his standing with Yhwh.

The association of the figure of Nebuchadrezzar with that of David by the epithet עבד־י has the effects of giving the Babylonian king a particularly elevated standing. Nebuchadrezzar is more than simply Yhwh's instrument in the destruction of Judah, as was the king of Assyria and who was designated simply as שבט אפ־י ("the rod of my anger").[37] While the use of such an expression is consistent with the idea of Yhwh's control over history, it however does not have the connotations of the word עבד־י, which as a designation placed on the lips of Yhwh is used of an exclusive and elevated few in the OT.[38]

The designation of Nebuchadrezzar as עבד־י could be likened to that of Cyrus as משיחו ("his anointed" – Isa 45:1). Like Nebuchadrezzar he is a foreign king, specifically called by name (v. 4), and clearly identified as Yhwh's instrument (v. 5). However such a positive portrait of Cyrus is not surprising because he is portrayed as Yhwh's agent in the restoration of the community. What is particularly striking about the designation of Nebuchadrezzar is that he is the instrument of the community's destruction. In this respect, he is not a parallel figure to Cyrus.[39]

Besides giving Nebuchadrezzar such an elevated standing, the epithet עבד־י has another effect. It signifies Yhwh's abandonment of the Davidic dynasty. It is another instance of the process in which Judah's sacred traditions are used to describe Nebuchadrezzar and the Babylonians. The use of the same designation for Nebuchadrezzar and David means that the founder of the Judean dynasty and its ideal king is no different from a foreign ruler. The abandonment of the Davidic dynasty is an emphasis consistent with the condemnation of the contemporary Judean kings in 21:11-23:8, the condemnation of Zedekiah in chap. 24, the threatened punishment of Jehoiakim in chap. 36, and the narrative of Zedekiah's capture and Jehoiachin's qualified release in

---

[37] Isa 10:5 is referred to by both Lemke ("Nebuchadrezzar," 46-47) and Overholt ("King Nebuchadnezzar," 46-47).

[38] On שבט אפ־י ("the rod of my anger"), see Overholt, "King Nebuchadnezzar," 46.

[39] Against Carroll, who sees Cyrus and Nebuchadrezzar as parallel figures (Jeremiah, 532).

chap. 52.[40] The startling designation of Nebuchadrezzar as עבדי
is then another instance of the subversion of a theological tradi-
tion which underpinned the existence of the Judean state. This
process was at work in 1:14-15 and 21:1-10, which identified Jerus-
alem's attacker not just as one or other foreign kings but as the
city's very own God.

A further effect of the designation of Nebuchadrezzar as עבדי
is that it brings the figures of Babylon and Judah into a meta-
phorical relationship of identification. Babylon is no longer sim-
ply the alien other, a figure which is the polar opposite to the
divinely chosen Judah and therefore to Yhwh. Judah is no longer
the elect, and no longer the one with whom Yhwh is aligned. The
undermining of the differences between Judah and Babylon con-
tinues in the subsequent sections in Jeremiah 25 MT, but the full
significance of this process does not become apparent until a study
of Jeremiah 29 MT.[41]

A shift in Babylon's standing comes in vv. 12-14 MT. To this
point in the chapter, Babylon has been represented as a figure
aligned with Yhwh, whose attack on Judah is a metaphor for judg-
ment. The close alignment has been brought about predominantly
through the designation of Nebuchadrezzar as עבדי.

In vv. 12-14 MT the dominant theme in the chapter of Yhwh's
judgment is continued here. However now it is Babylon which
must undergo judgment and be punished. Their common fate
and common guilt bring about another metaphorical identifica-
tion between the two. By means of a different literary strategy they
are again represented as similar figures. Previously in v. 11 Baby-
lon is said to be the conqueror of an unnamed group of nations:
ועבדו הגוים האלה את־מלך בבל שבעים שנה ("and these nations shall
serve the king of Babylon seventy years").[42] But then in v. 12 its
situation is suddenly reversed:

---

[40] See above, 84-86, for a treatment of 21:11–23:8 and Jeremiah 24. See above,
97-100, for a brief treatment of Jeremiah 36. See above, 28-30, for a treatment
of Jehoiachin's release.

[41] See below, 146-148.

[42] The expression הגוים האלה ("these nations") refers to Judah's neighbours.
In vv. 10-11 there is a twofold elaboration of the punishment announced in v. 9.
The first part of the elaboration is in vv. 10-11a, which describes the subjugation
and devastation of Judah. The second part is in v. 11b, which refers to the sub-
jugation of Judah's neighbours. Vv. 10-11 then distinguish the fate of Judah from
that of its neighbours, which is that of subjugation. Judah's fate is to suffer the

Then after seventy years are completed,	והיה
	כמלאות שבעים שנה
I will punish the king of	אפקד על־מלך־בבל
Babylon and that nation,	ועל־הגוי ההוא
the land of the Chaldeans,	נאם־יהוה
for their iniquity,	את־עונם
says the LORD,	ועל־ארץ כשדים
making it	ושמתי אתו
an everlasting waste	לשממות עולם:
(25:12 MT)	

Babylon is now to be punished, a theme which is extended into v. 14: ושלמתי להם כפעלם וכמעשה ידיהם ("I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands").

The significance of the shift in the portrait of Babylon now needs investigation. There are three expressions used in connection with Babylon's punishment: עון ("iniquity" – v. 12), פעל ("deed" – v. 14) and מעשה ידיהם ("works of their hands"). The reference to the עון of Babylon in v. 12 is the first in the book, and no explanation is given.[43] One function then of עונם ("their iniquity") in 25:12 is to anticipate a theme of chaps. 50-51 MT, the oracles against Babylon. Similarly, the word פעל ("deed"), while not frequent in the book, is used of Babylon in 50:29-34. According to this verse, Babylon's punishment is recompense for her deeds, which in 50:29 are interpreted as defiance of Yhwh: כי יהוה זדה

___

devastation of its land. There is no mention of exile. For the above exegesis of vv. 10-11 see Adrian Schenker, "Nebukadnezzars Metamorphose vom Unterjocher zum Gottesknecht: Das Bild Nebukadnezzars und einige mit ihm zusammenhängende Unterschiede in den beiden Jeremia-Rezensionen," *RB* 89 (1982) 513-517.

[43] The word חטא ("sin, guilt"), a synonym for עון, is used of Babylon only once in the book, in 50:14: כי ליהוה חטאה ("for she has sinned against the LORD").

Apart from here in 25:12 MT, the verb פקד ("to visit") with עון is found only in 36:31, where it is used in the final oracle of punishment against Jehoiakim (as noted by Gunnel André, *Determining the Destiny: PQD in the Old Testament* [Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1980] 200).

The word עון ("guilt") in the book is always used in reference to Judah: 14:10; 16:17, 18; 18:23; 25:12; 31:34; 33:8; 36:3, 31. To this point in the book there is no suggestion about what constitutes Babylon's guilt. It is used of Babylon in Isa 13:11. However the idea of punishing the guilt of Babylon is no surprise here because of the context: Isaiah 13-14 is a series of oracles against Babylon. In a number of instances in the OT the expression is used in reference to Yhwh's punishment of Israel for breach of covenant: כי אנכי יהוה אלהיך אל קנא פקד עון אבת על־בנים על־שלשים ועל־רבעים לשנאי ("for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me" – Exod 20:5; Exod 34:7; Lev 18:25; Num 14:18; Deut 5:9).

("for she has arrogantly defied the LORD"). פעלם ("their deeds")
also anticipates a theme of chaps. 50-51.

There is nowhere else in the book where the expression מעשה
ידיהם ("the work of their hands") is used in reference to Baby-
lon. However it does occur in 10:1-16, the polemic against idola-
try.[44] In this passage Judah is admonished: אל־דרך הגוים אל־תלמדו
("do not learn the way of the nations" – 10:2). The practices in
question are the making and worship of idols which are referred
to as מעשה ידי־חרש ("the work of the hands of the craftsman" –
v. 3)[45]. The connection between 25:14 and 10:3 indicates that the
worship of idols is the reason for Babylon's punishment, a theme
resumed in chaps. 50-51 MT.[46]

Ironically, the expression מעשה ידיהם is used more frequently
of Judah's idolatrous practices (1:16; 25:6, 7; 32:30; 44:8). In 25:7
the refusal to abandon these practices is the grounds for Judah's
punishment at the hands of the Babylonians: ולא־שמעתם אלי...למען
הכעסוני במעשה ידיכם ("Yet you did not listen to me...and so you
provoked me to anger with the work of your hands").[47] The ex-
pression מעשה ידיהם provides a link between the figures of Baby-
lon and Judah. Both guilty of the same offence, they are both to
be punished in the same way.

Links between Judah and Babylon are also established by the
presence of other imagery in 25:1-14 MT. In v. 9 Judah's land (and
that of its neighbours) will be made desolate: ושמתים לשמה לשרקה
ולחרבות עולם ("I will utterly destroy them and make them an ob-
ject of horror and of hissing, and an everlasting disgrace"). The
words לחרבה and לשמה are also found in v. 11. The fate of Baby-
lon is similarly described in v. 12: ושמתי אתו לשממות עולם ("making

---

[44] 10:1-16 is a much studied passage, particularly in regard to its composi-
tional history. For this issue, see especially P.-M. Bogaert, "Les mécanismes
rédactionnels en Jér 10,1-16 (LXX et TM) et la signification des suppléments,"
Le livre de Jérémie: le prophète et son mileu les oracles et leur transmission (BETL 54;
Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1981) 222-238; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 216-228;
McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:324-337. Its literal integrity is treated particularly by P. R.
Ackroyd, "Jeremiah X. 1-16," *JTS* NS 14 (1963) 385-390; M. Margaliot, "Jeremiah
x 1-16: A re-examination," *VT* 30 (1980) 295-308; Thomas W. Overholt, "The False-
hood of Idolatry: An Interpretation of Jer. X 1-16," *JTS* NS 16 (1965) 1-12.

[45] The translation is that of Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 322.

[46] See below, 175-176.

[47] Following the *ketib*, הכעיסני, with Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 662) and Thompson
(*Jeremiah*, 509).

it an everlasting waste").[48] Both Judah and Babylon will share a
similar fate of subjection to different conquerors, as the presence
of עבד ("to serve") in vv. 11 and 14 indicates. They are not only
condemned for the same thing, but are condemned to suffer the
same fate.

Within 25:1-14 MT Babylon is a figure subordinate to Yhwh,
whose action dominates the passage. It is initially a metaphor for
Yhwh's judgment on Judah. As the conqueror of Judah and its
neighbours, its action against them is executed only by the com-
mand of Yhwh (v. 9). Its subordinate position is also signified by
the designation of Nebuchadrezzar in a Yhwh speech as עבדי
(v. 9). Its subordinate status is most clearly articulated in vv. 12-
14, which describe how Yhwh will act against Babylon and will
reduce it to a state of servitude to unnamed nations.

The shift in Babylon's fortunes in vv. 12-14 brings about a change
in the relationship between the figures of Babylon, Judah and Yhwh.
In 25:1-11 Nebuchadrezzar is Yhwh's agent in the destruction and
subjugation of Judah and its neighbours. A relationship of oppo-
sition exists between Yhwh and Babylon on the one side, and Judah
on the other. Through the shift in vv. 12-14 the relationship be-
tween the three figures changes. Babylon is linked to Judah, so
that the opposition is now between them on the one side and
Yhwh on the other. The effect of vv. 12-14 is to blur the differ-
ences between Babylon and Judah. While this subverts any sug-
gestion of a special status for Judah, it does offer a hope that Yhwh's
judgment of Babylon implies a future for Judah.

3.2. *Babylon and Vv. 1-13 LXX*

A comparison with 25:1-13 LXX highlights the distinctive view of
Babylon in the MT of chap. 25.[49] In the LXX Babylon hardly fig-
ures. The differences between the MT and the LXX are appar-
ent from the very beginning of the chapter. Where v. 1 MT has

---

[48] For the translation of אוה as "that nation", see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 663;
McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:624; Rietzschel, *Urrolle*, 28. The word אוה is translated in the
NRSV as "the land", perhaps in view of the suggestion of Rudolph that אוה be
emended to ההוא (*Jeremia*, 162).

[49] For the differences between the LXX and MT in chap. 25, see Georg Fis-
cher, "Jer 25 und die Fremdvölkersprüche: Unterschiede zwischen hebräischem
und griechischem Text," *Bib* 72 (1991) 474–499; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:618-658; Adrian
Schenker, "Nebukadnezzars Metamorphose," 498-527.

regnal citations for both Jehoiakim and Nebuchadrezzar, v. 1 LXX omits any reference to the rule of Nebuchadrezzar.

Significant differences also appear in vv. 9-14 MT (vv. 9-13 LXX). The differences in the MT are underlined:

v. 9 ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω καὶ	הנני שלח
λήμψομαι τὴν πατριὰν ἀπὸ βορρᾶ	ולקחתי את־כל־משפחות צפון
καὶ ἄξω αὐτοὺς	נאם־יהוה
ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ταύτην	ואל־נבוכדראצר מלך־בבל עבדי
καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς κατοικοῦντας αὐτὴν καὶ ἐπὶ	והבאתים על־הארץ הזאת
πάντα τὰ ἔθνη	ועל־ישביה
τὰ κύκλῳ αὐτῆς	ועל כל־גוים האלה
καὶ ἐξερημώσω αὐτοὺς	סביב והחרמתים
καὶ δώσω αὐτοὺς εἰς ἀφανισμὸν καὶ εἰς	ושמתים לשמה
συριγμὸν	ולשרקה
καὶ εἰς ὀνειδισμὸν αἰώνιον·	ולחרבות עולם :
v. 10 καὶ ἀπολῶ ἀπ᾽ αὐτῶν φωνὴν	והאבדתי מהם
χαρᾶς καὶ	קול ששון
φωνὴν εὐφροσύνης φωνὴν νυμφίου καὶ	וקול שמחה קול חתן
φωνὴν νύμφης ὀσμὴν μύρου καὶ φῶς	וקול כלה קול רחים
λύχνου.	ואור נר:
v. 11 καὶ ἔσται πᾶσα ἡ γῆ	והיתה כל־ארץ הזאת
εἰς ἀφανισμὸν καὶ δουλεύσουσιν ἐν τοῖς	לחרבה לשמה ועבדו
ἔθνεσιν	הגוים האלה את־מלך בבל
ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτη.	שבעים שנה:
v. 12 καὶ ἐν τῷ πληρωθῆναι	והיה כמאות
τὰ ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτη	שבעים שנה
ἐκδικήσω τὸ ἔθνος ἐκεῖνο	אפקד על־מלך־בבל ועל־הגוי ההוא נאם־יהוה
φησὶν κύριος	ועל־ארץ כשדים
καὶ θήσομαι αὐτοὺς	ושמתי אתו לשממות עולם:
εἰς ἀφανισμὸν αἰώνιον·	

v. 13 καὶ ἐπάξω ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἐκείνην והבאיתי על־הארץ ההיא את־כל־דברי
πάντας τοὺς λόγους μου οὓς ἐλάλησα κατ᾽ אשר־דברתי עליה את כל־הכתוב בספר
הזה
αὐτῆς πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ אשר־נבא ירמיהו על־כל־הגוים:
βιβλίῳ τούτῳ.

LXX	MT
v. 9 See I will send for the clan from the north	*v. 9* I am going to send for all the tribes of the north, says the LORD, even for King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these nations around; I will utterly destroy them, and make them an object of horror and of hissing, and an everlasting disgrace.
and I will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants, and against the nations all around it; I will destroy them and make them a horror, a hissing and an everlasting desolation.	
v. 10 And I will remove from them the sound of mirth and the sound of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the fragrance of perfume and the light of the lamp.	*v. 10* And I will banish from them the sound of mirth and the sound of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp.
v. 11 And the whole land will become a waste, and they shall serve among the nations seventy years.	*v. 11* This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.
v. 12 And when seventy years are completed, I will punish that nation,	*v. 12* Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, says the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste.
says the LORD, and I will make them into an everlasting waste	
v. 13 And I will bring upon that land all of my words, which I spoke against them,	*v. 13* I will bring upon that land all the words which I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against the _ nations.
all which is written in this book.	

> *v. 14* <u>For many nations and great kings shall make slaves of them also; and I will repay them according to their deeds, and the work of their hands.</u>

A comparison of the two textual traditions at this point shows how they differ in their portrait of Babylon. In vv. 1-13 LXX there is no reference to Babylon at all, while in vv. 1-14 its role is a major issue.

In v. 9, where MT identifies Nebuchadrezzar as Yhwh's agent of judgment, the LXX has τὴν πατριὰν ἀπὸ βορρᾶ ("the clan from the north"), the identity of which is not disclosed. In v. 11 LXX there is also no reference to Babylon, whereas v. 11 MT specifically identifies Babylon as the subjugator of Judah and its neighbours: ועבדו הגוים האלה את־מלך בבל ("and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon"). In contrast, v. 11 LXX reads: δουλεύσουσιν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ("they shall be slaves among the nations").

Another difference is in v. 12, the LXX form of which has no references to Babylon while the MT form has three: מלך־בבל ("the king of Babylon"), הגוי ההוא ("that nation") and ארץ כשדים ("the land of the Chaldeans"). In v. 12 MT Babylon is the specific target for Yhwh's punishment. In v. 12 LXX it is the unidentified conqueror, referred to as τὸ ἔθνος ἐκεῖνο ("that nation"), which is to be punished. The phrase הגוי ההוא, which in v. 12 MT refers to Babylon, is represented in the LXX by τὸ ἔθνος ἐκεῖνο, the identity of which is not revealed.

V. 14 MT, which foretells the subjugation of Babylon by other nations, is not represented at all in the LXX.

The focus of 25:1-13 LXX is the fate of Judah, whereas the focus of vv. 1-14 MT shifts from the fate of Judah to that of Babylon. The number of references to Babylon in the MT, when compared to the absence in the LXX of any such references, highlights the distinctive perspective of the former. The important elements of MT's perspective are its focus on the figure of Nebuchadrezzar. The citation of his reign in v. 1 and his designation as עבדי are not found in the LXX. The metaphorical association of Judah with Babylon is also not in the LXX. In the MT Nebuchadrezzar and the Babylonians are identified as Judah's invaders, another feature of the MT absent from the LXX. The prediction of an

end to Babylonian domination is also an element of the MT's distinct perspective and is absent from the LXX.

The concern with Babylon in vv. 1-14 MT is also apparent in its next section, vv. 15-29.

3.3. *Babylon in Vv. 15-29 MT*

A major shift in the representation of Babylon takes place in vv. 15-29, where it is portrayed as a figure of mystery whose identity cannot be reduced to any one nation or geographic region from any one period in history. While it is mentioned only once in these verses, it occurs at a critical place in the text.

To this point in the text the figure of Babylon resembles the historical Babylon of the late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE. Its king is identified as Nebuchadrezzar. The material in vv. 1-14 is situated in a particular year of his reign. It was the Babylon of the late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE which invaded and conquered Judah.

In vv. 15-29 however Babylon is a figure which transcends time and space. Instead of being represented through the figure of a king who is specifically named, in vv. 15-29 Babylon is represented by a cipher שֵׁשַׁךְ ("Sheshach") behind which its identity is hidden. This representation of Babylon in vv. 15-29 is enhanced by the disintegration in these verses of a coherent geographical framework. Babylon is not a figure which can be identified with any place or nation. Again it is important to note that the foundation for this interpretation of Babylon is a recogniton of the literary dynamics of the final form of the text. Studies of Jeremiah 25 MT which are based on a preference for the LXX as the superior text, or which concentrate only on redactional processes, have not given sufficient weight to the present text, and the significance of Babylon as a literary figure within it.

The theme of opposition between Yhwh and Babylon, which occurs in vv. 11-14, is continued in vv. 15-29. In these verses Jeremiah administers to the nations the cup of wine which symbolises Yhwh's judgment.[50] The submission of Babylon is the climax of the divine judgment on the world.

---

[50] The image of a cup as a symbol of divine punishment is found elsewhere in the OT: e.g., Isa 51:22; Jer 49:12; 51:7; Ezek 23:31-33. The origin of the image

Vv. 15-29 are a report of a symbolic act. In vv. 15-26 there is the command to perform the symbolic action (v. 15), a description of its consequences (v. 16), the performance of the action (v. 17) and a list of those who must drink (vv. 18-26).[51] Vv. 27-29, in the form of a prediction of disaster, deal with the possibility of the refusal to drink.[52] The symbolic action in these verses is the drinking of the cup of wine, which Jeremiah is to administer: קח את־כוס היין החמה הזאת מידי והשקיתה אתו את־כל־הגוים אשר אנכי שלח אותך אליהם ("Take from my hand this cup of wine – of wrath – and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it" – v. 15).[53]

---

has been studied by H. A. Brongers, "Der Zornesbecher", *Oudtestamentische Studien* 15 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969) 177-192; Christensen, *Prophecy and War*, 199-207; William McKane, "Poison, Trial by Ordeal and the Cup of Wrath," *VT* 30 (1980) 474-492.

[51] For the elements of this genre, see Hals, *Ezekiel*, 354-355; W. Eugene March, "Prophecy," *Old Testament Form Criticism* (ed. John H. Hayes; San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977) 172; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 536-537.

[52] For further on the prediction of disaster see Klaus Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form Critical Method* (Aberdeen: University Press, 1969) 193.

[53] The above translation of v. 15, in which the noun החמה is in apposition and so interprets the meaning of כוס היין, is that suggested by E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Second English Edition; Oxford: Clarendon, 1910) 425. For כוס היין החמה הזאת the NRSV has "the cup of the wine of wrath", an impossible translation as Holladay points out (*Jeremiah 1*, 670).

The expression הכוס היין החמה (Jer 25:15) does not occur elsewhere, and may in fact be an image which consists of several strands. McKane appeals to the practice of trial by ordeal described in Numbers 5 as a partial source, but also recognises that this text does not account for wine as the contents of the cup ("Poison, Trial by Ordeal and the Cup of Wrath," 491). Any connection between Jer 25:15ff with the imagery of trial by ordeal is rejected by Brongers ("Der Zornesbecher", 183). He also sees aspects of the theme in other biblical passages and in Babylonian and Assyrian sources, but concludes that these sources do not adequately explain the origin of the imagery in Jer 25:15ff ("Der Zornesbecher," 188-189).

The interpretation of the image in this passage is obscured by the ambiguity of the *hithpo'el* verb התגעשו. As Holladay notes, a translation of "reel" has often been given ("stagger" – NRSV), but the *hithpo'el* form of the word in 46:8 refers to the rise and fall of water in the Nile. In 5:22 and 46:7 the *hithpa'el* form of the verb appears and refers to the surging of water (Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 674). This would suggest "retch" or "vomit" as the best translation. He has "retch" in his translation of v. 16 and "vomit" in v. 27 (*ibid.*, 670, 671).

McKane arrives at the same conclusions but by a different path. He discusses the nature of the cup's contents: are they wine which produces intoxication, or are they poison which brings about sickness? He relies on Jer 8:14; 9:14 and 23:15, in which Yhwh is said to give poisonous water to the people to drink, and also appeals to the Targum's translation of מי ראש in these passages as "a cup of curse, as poisonous as a serpent's venom" (McKane, *Jeremiah*, I, 635). The Targum also translates כוס היין החמה הזאת as כסא רחמר לוטא הדין – "This cup of wine of curse" (*ibid.*). This suggests "vomit" as a more accurate translation than "stagger".

Some clarification can be obtained from v. 27 which refers to the drinking of

The list of the nations and its order provide the clues for interpreting the figure of Babylon in these verses. The first group to whom Jeremiah is sent with the cup is in Judah: אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַ͏ִם וְאֶת־עָרֵי יְהוּדָה וְאֶת־מְלָכֶיהָ אֶת־שָׂרֶיהָ ("Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and officials" – v. 18). That Yhwh's judgment on all the nations begins in Jerusalem and Judah is found already in vv. 1-14 and repeated in v. 29.[54] Although the list begins with Jerusalem and ends with Babylon, it is not in a geographic order which begins with Judah and then proceeds systematically from places nearest to Jerusalem to places which are furthest away.[55] What is clear about the order of the list is the metaphorical dimension, which is signalled by its beginning and conclusion.

The first of the foreign nations mentioned is Egypt (v. 19). In the OT as a whole and in the book of Jeremiah in particular, the figure of Egypt has a metaphorical significance.[56] Behind 15:1-4 stands the metaphor of Egypt as the land of oppression from which the people were delivered. In 2:6 the deliverance from Egypt is the first event in Judah's history.[57] In the review of Judah's history in 7:21-26, the deliverance from Egypt is similarly identified as the beginning: לְמִן־הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר יָצְאוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה ("from the day that your ancestors came out of the land of Egypt until this day" – v. 25).[58] In 16:14-16 and 23:7-8 it is associated

---

the cup again: שְׁתוּ וְשִׁכְרוּ וּקְיוּ. The verb שׁכר unambiguously means "to be drunk" or "to get drunk", and קיה "to vomit". This would suggest that the figure of a cup of poison is not relevant for the image in Jer 25:15ff. For שׁכר as "to be drunk" or "to get drunk", see *BDB*, 1016; *Gesenius' Lexicon*, 823. For קיה as "to vomit" see *BDB*, 883; *Gesenius' Lexicon*, 731.

[54] So, Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up, To Tear Down*, 217; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:637.

Vv. 27-29 resume the imagery of drinking from the cup and the sword. The repetition of the command to drink in v. 27 serves the rhetorical function of connecting the reader back to the central image of the narrative, the immediacy of which has been lost by the inclusion of the long list in vv. 18-26.

[55] Rudolph explains the order of the list using both historical and geographical factors. However, his explanation holds only if certain names be omitted from the list (*Jeremia*, 164-166). Likewise Jones sees a geographical order in the list, but can only conclude this by omitting the names of places which are introduced by כָּל־מַלְכֵי ("all the kings of") in the list (Douglas Rawlinson Jones, *Jeremiah* [NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992] 331). For a summary of the identity of the nations and their place in the list, see McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:637-640.

[56] The role of the Exodus as a central metaphor in Israel's religious traditions is well summarised by Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979) 121-140.

[57] As noted by Rudolph, *Jeremiah*, 15.

[58] For similar usage, see also 11:1-8.

firstly with a *confessio fidei* (16:14; 23:7) about to become obsolete.

Egypt's position as the first of the foreign nations listed in vv. 18-26 points to its metaphorical function. It appears before Edom, Moab and the land of the Philistines, places which are closer to Judah either by blood or by distance. A comparison with the order of the list in the LXX supports this interpretation. In the LXX, the first foreign nation in the list is Elam (25:14-20 LXX) and the last Moab (31:1-44 LXX). The MT's list of the foreign nations is framed by two powers who not only played a major part in Judah's political history, but who also figure prominently in its religious traditions.

The list concludes with the king of Babylon, the last to drink the cup, in v. 26:

all the kings of the north,	ואת כל־מלכי הצפון
far and near,	הקרבים והרחקים
one after another,	איש אל־אחיו
and all the kingdoms of the	ואת כל־ממלכות הארץ אשר
world that are on the face of	על־פני האדמה
the earth.	
And after them the king of	ומלך ששך ישתה
Sheshach shall drink.	אחריהם:
(25:26 MT)	

The submission of Babylon is the climax of Yhwh's judgment, not only because of its position as last on the list, but also because of the syntax of v. 26b.[59] The other groups on the list are deisgnated by the definite object marker את, and are grammatically dependent on the verb ואשקה ("and I made drink" – v. 17). The syntax of v. 26b is different. מלך ששך is the subject of the verb ישתה ("he shall drink") and occupies the place of emphasis in the clause. The other groups are more passively portrayed. They are made to drink, as the use of שקה *hifil* in v. 17 indicates. This nuance is absent in v. 26b, which emphasises the action of the Babylonian king.

Babylon is portrayed as something other than a geographical entity, as vv. 18-26 indicate. The list begins in v. 18 with groups who are identifiable geographic entities, and continues in the same vein until v. 23.[60] Besides the specifically identifiable places Dedan,

---

[59] As noted by McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:641.
[60] In vv. 19-20aα the references are all to Egypt. V. 20 begins with the expres-

Tema and Buz, v. 23 refers to כל־קצוצי פאה, a generic term which, as 9:25 indicates, refers to those who live in the desert.[61] From this point on the list takes on a more generic character and ceases to be a list of identifiable nations and places.[62]

This is the context in which Babylon appears in v. 26. The verse first refers to כל־מלכי הצפון ("all the kings of the north"). As shown earlier, צפון in the book of Jeremiah is a metaphor and does not have a geographic significance.[63] Next in the verse is the generic expression הקרבים והרחקים איש אל־אחיו ("far and near, one after another"), which is followed by כל־הממלכות הארץ אשר על־פני

---

sion ואת כל־עבר ("all the mixed people"), an expression which belongs to v. 19 and which describes a mixed population in Egypt (see Duhm, *Jeremia*, 204; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:637; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 165).

   In v. 20 there is a reference to Uz, a place connected with Edom in Gen 36:28 and Lam 4:21 (so, Claus Westermann, *Lamentations: Issues and Interpretation* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994] 205; also his *Genesis 12-36*, 367-368). In v. 20 there is also the expression כל־מלכי ארץ פלשתים ("all the kings of the land of the Philistines"), which is followed by a list of various Philistine city-states: Askelon, Gaza, Ekron, Ashdod (McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:638).

   In v. 21 the designated places are Edom, Moab and Amon; in v. 22 Tyre, Sidon and neighbouring areas.

   [61] As noted by McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:639.

   [62] V. 24 refers to two generic groups: ואת כל־מלכי ערב ואת כל־מלכי הערב השכנים במדבר ("all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed peoples who live in the desert"). The word ערב ("Arabia") in v. 24a refers to the area of the northern Arabian peninsula which borders Palestine. Gesenius defines the area to which ערב refers as "a tract of country of no very large extent, to the east and south of Palestine, as far as the Red Sea" (*Gesenius' Lexicon*, 651). In Ezek 27:21 ערב means the desert area east of Syria-Palestine (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 68).

   In v. 24b there is the word ערב, which as in v. 20 means "foreign" or "mixed". The identity of the group in v. 24b remains unclear.

   In v. 25 there are great difficulties with any attempt to interpret the list against a historical or geographical background: ואת כל־מלכי זמרי ואת כל־מלכי עילם ואת כל־מלכי מדי ("all the kings of Zimri, all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of Media"). The meaning of זמרי ("Zimri") is not known (so, Bright, *Jeremiah*, 161; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 500; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 518). It may be related to זמרן ("Zimrun"), a son of Abraham whose name is associated in Gen 25:2 with the desert lands east of Palestine (so, Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 396). Alternatively, זמרי has been interpreted by Duhm (*Jeremia*, 205-206) as a cipher for רומאי ("Roman"), or emended to זמכי ("Zimchi"), an *athbash* for עילם ("Elam") by Holladay (*Jeremiah 2*, 675), McKane (*Jeremiah*, 1:639) and Rudolph, (*Jeremia*, 164).

   [63] See above, 47-54. For צפון as a metaphor in v. 26 for the origin of mysterious forces, see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 675. As McKane notes, the LXX translates מלכי הצפון as βασιλεῖς ἀπὸ ἀπηλιώτου ("kings of the east"). While offering no solution to the difficulties in this verse, he observes that "the combination of vagueness and universality in the verse after the specific listing of nations which precedes it is striking" (*Jeremiah*, 1:640).

האדמה ("all the kingdoms of the world that are on the face of the earth"). This latter expression embraces every nation and in one sense concludes the list: there is now no one left to submit. It is at this point that Babylon enters the picture.

After every nation on earth has submitted, the king of Babylon drinks the cup. The effect of the sequence in v. 26b is to portray Babylon as not belonging to the list of the groups or nations. Whatever Babylon is, it is neither a geographic nor spatial entity. It stands outside the nations included in the expression כל־הממלכות הארץ אשר על־פני האדמה ("all the kingdoms of the world that are on the face of the earth"). Furthermore the king who submits is in v. 26 is מלך ששך ("king of Sheshach") and not נבוכדראצר מלך בבל ("king Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon"), the Babylonian king of vv. 1, 9 and 12. The Babylon of v. 26 and the Babylon of the late seventh and early sixth centuries are not to be completely identified.[64]

The use of ששך ("Sheshach"), an *athbash* for בבל ("Babylon"), creates an air of mystery.[65] The term appears here for the first time in the book and without any explanation. As a cipher it has the effect of hiding the identity of the figure it represents. Its use here is different to that in 51:41, where it occurs as a parallel expression to בבל: איך נלכדה ששך...איך היתה לשמה בבל בגוים ("How Sheshach is taken...How Babylon has become an object of horror among the nations"). In 25:26 ששך is a figure whose identity is partially accessible to the reader who understands how the *athbash* works. But its designation as a figure which stands outside the nations of the world, and therefore not within the ordinary framework of human knowledge and experience, gives its identity the aspect of impenetrability.

Given that it is a figure which cannot be identified with one particular era of history and one particular place or nation, Babylon

---

[64] It is already well recognised that the word ששך here does not refer to the Babylon of the late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE. Duhm, who argues that the book of Jeremiah has a long redactional history, proposed that it refers to the Ptolomies of the third century BCE (*Jeremia*, 206). This is also the view of Rietzschel, *Urrolle*, 87. What they have done is to identify the figure of Babylon with one only historical entity, thus ignoring the polyvalent nature of the text.

[65] An *athbash* is a particular form of a code "in which the letters of a name counted from the beginning of the alphabet are exchanged for letters counted from the end" (Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 518 n. 13). That it adds a note of mystery in 25:26 MT is recognised by Cornill, *Jeremia*, 295.

in vv. 15-26 is a metaphor. It represents an entity which is opposed to Yhwh, and whose submission represents the climax of the judgment which has already begun.

The differences between the LXX and MT are important in vv. 15-29, and confirm the key position Babylon has in Jeremiah 25 MT. In the LXX the narrative of the nations' drinking the cup is in 32:15-26 LXX. Like that in the MT, the list in the LXX begins with Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, but concludes differently.[66] For v. 26, where the MT finishes with the submission of Babylon, the LXX concludes with καὶ πάσας τὰς βασιλείας τὰς ἐπὶ προσώπου τῆς γῆς ("and all the kingdoms upon the face of the earth").

Furthermore, within the LXX's oracles against the nations (25:14-32:13 LXX), which precede the narrative of the drinking of the cup, the figure of Babylon is of no great significance. In the MT, the oracles against Babylon (chaps. 50-51) are placed last, and so bring to a climax the oracles against the nations (chaps. 46-51). In the LXX the oracles against Babylon (chaps. 27-28) are placed third in the collection of the oracles against the nations, a position to which no particular significance can be attached.[67]

Another significant difference can be seen, this time in v. 18. Where the MT describes Jerusalem and Judah as already in ruins כיום הזה ("today"), there is no equivalent expression in the v. 18 LXX. In other words, the construction of time in the MT is not found in the LXX. The LXX does not describe Jerusalem and Judah as already in ruins, and does not therefore collapse the chronological distance between 605 and 587. In the LXX the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians still lies in the future, while in the MT Jerusalem is already destroyed. Yhwh's judgment has begun, but is not yet fully realised, as the conclusion of Jeremiah 25 MT shows.

In vv. 30-38, which conclude the chapter, the same differentia-

---

[66] The MT's list is longer. The LXX does not have את כל־מלכי ארץ העוץ ("all the kings of the land of Uz" – v. 23), כל־מלכי ערב ("all the kings of Arabia" – v. 24) and כל־מלכי זמרי ("all the kings of Zimri" – v. 25). These differences are much noted, e.g., James W. Watts, "Text and Redaction in Jeremiah's Oracles against the Nations," *CBQ* 54 (1992) 432-447.

[67] The arrangement of the oracles against the nations is treated below, 161-165.

tion of the present from the future can be seen.[68] The present is
characterised as time in which Yhwh begins the judgment:
הנה רעה יצאת מגוי אל־גוי וסער גדול יעור מירכתי־ארץ ("See, disaster is
spreading from nation to nation, and a great tempest is stirring
from the farthest parts of the earth" – v. 32). The future is the
time in which the judgment will be fulfilled and its effects seen
on the earth: והיו חללי יהוה ביום ההוא מקצה הארץ ועד־קצה הארץ
("those slain on that day by the LORD shall extend from one end
of the earth to the other – v. 33).

The end of Jeremiah 25 MT marks the major division of the
book. It concludes with the prediction of Yhwh's world judgment,
a process which has already begun with the destruction of Jerus-
alem but still has to run its course. The chapter's conclusion leaves
the reader with an ambiguity about the future. Yes, Yhwh's judg-
ment has begun, but after its realisation what will follow? Any state-
ments of hope for Judah's future are expressed very indirectly
and are at best implicit in the predicted submission and destruc-
tion of Babylon.

The representation of the future in Jeremiah 25 MT is charac-
terised by that same oblique and muted hope found in chap. 52.
Whatever the future may be, it is not yet in sight. Jerusalem is
still in ruins, and Babylon is still dominant.

4. *Conclusions*

There are two aspects to the figure of Babylon in Jeremiah 25
MT. It is represented in vv. 1-11 as similar to the Babylon of the

---

[68] 25:30-38, which conclude Jeremiah 25 MT, divide into vv. 30-31 and
vv. 32-38. Vv. 30-31 are a prophetic oracle, introduced by ואתה תנבא ("You there-
fore shall prophesy") and concluded by נאם־יהוה ("says the LORD"). They use two
different images for the judgment. The first is that of a roaring lion, which is a
metaphor here for Yhwh: יהוה ממרום ישאג וממעון קדשו יתן קולו ("The LORD will
roar from on high; and from his holy habitation utter his voice" – v. 30). The
second is that of a lawsuit: ריב ליהוה בגוים נשפט הוא לכל־בשר ("for the LORD has
an indictment against the nations; he is entering into judgment with all flesh" –
v. 31).

Vv. 32-38 continue the theme of judgment. They begin with the introduct-
ory כי אמר יהוה צבאות ("Thus says the LORD of hosts"), and are a prophetic ora-
cle, which uses the language of lament and death. The images of Yhwh's judg-
ment include that of a storm (v. 32), a slaughter (vv. 34-37) and a lion (v. 38).
The outcome of Yhwh's action is an earth that is devasted (v. 38) and polluted
by the bones of unburied bodies which cover it (v. 33).

late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE, the Babylon which was Judah's invader and conqueror. Within the chapter there is a shift from that representation to one in vv. 15-26 where Babylon is a figure which transcends historical or geographical settings. It is a figure of mystery which cannot be completely identified with any particular nation or land, and which cannot be confined to one particular period of history.

In both instances Babylon is a metaphor. In vv. 1-11 it is a metaphor for Yhwh's judgment on Judah. In vv. 15-26 it is a metaphor for the enemy of Yhwh, whose submission is the climax of the divine judgment of the world.

This interpretation of the figure of Babylon is founded on an examination of the literary dynamics of the present text of Jeremiah 25 MT. In this respect it differs from the more common approaches to the chapter which are informed by text-critical and redactional issues. The approach of the present study has generated a different set of insights, the most important of which is the recognition of the metaphorical as fundamental to the interpretation of the chapter. In particular close attention has been given to the collapse of coherent chronological and geographic frameworks in the chapter and their hermeneutical significance.

The major theme of Jeremiah 25 MT is that of a world judgment, and its dominant figure Yhwh. In this context the figure of Babylon is portrayed initially as Yhwh's ally and agent in the judgment of Judah, and subsequently as Yhwh's opponent in the judgment on the world.

At the beginning of Jeremiah 25 MT, Babylon is portrayed through the figure of its king, Nebuchadrezzar. It was the political power which controlled Judah's destiny (v. 1). Its attack on Judah, sanctioned by Yhwh (v. 9), is the metaphor in vv. 1-11 for Yhwh's judgment on Judah. The designation of Nebuchadrezzar as servant of Yhwh who conducts Yhwh's holy war also identifies him as a figure like Joshua, Yhwh's partner in the holy war of the conquest of the land. The designation עבדי also gives the Babylonian king a standing equal to that of Judah's king David (v. 9), and signifies not only the elevation of Nebuchadrezzar, but also Yhwh's abandonment of the Davidic dynasty. A pagan king is now portrayed as the equal of the one who was both founder of the Judean dynasty and its model king. The designation also points to the undermining of the differences between a Judah which is

Yhwh's elect, and a Babylon which is the alien other. Judah and Babylon are also cast as similar figures, a process whose fuller significance becomes apparent only after a study of Jeremiah 29 MT.

In vv. 12-14 there is a shift in the portrait of Babylon. It is no longer the metaphor for Yhwh's judgment on Judah, but is now portrayed as a figure whom Yhwh will punish. It is to be punished by the same God for the same offence and in the same way as was Judah. In this way Babylon is a similar figure to Judah. Both become opponents of Yhwh because of their association with other deities.

In vv. 15-29 the theme of Yhwh's world judgment is continued, and within these verses there is another shift in the portrait of Babylon. Because of the construction of time and space peculiar to vv. 15-29, the figure of Babylon portrayed in these verses cannot be identified with any particular nation or region, or with any particular period of history. Identified by cipher, whose effect is to conceal its identity, Babylon stands apart from the other nations of the world as a figure of mystery. At the same time it stands under Yhwh's judgment, the climax of which is Babylon's submission.

Jeremiah 25 MT concludes with Yhwh's judgment already under way. Jerusalem is in ruins. The demise of Babylon is predicted but not yet realised.

BABYLON IN JEREMIAH 27 AND 29 MT

Jeremiah 27 and 29 MT present the most startling views of Baby-
lon of any to be found in the book. In both chapters Babylon is
metaphorically represented as having the same standing and char-
acteristics as Judah. In Jeremiah 27 MT, it is represented by the
figure of Nebuchadnezzar who is portrayed as a figure of equal
standing to the greatest of the Judean kings.[1] He is also the in-
heritor of the patriarchal promises and has a similar divinely con-
ferred authority over the created order as that of the first human
in the creation narrative of Genesis 2. In his representation in
Jeremiah 27 MT he can scarcely be differentiated from a good
Davidic king.

In Jeremiah 29 MT Babylon is represented as a place in which
the exiles can experience the very blessings which the Deutero-
nomic traditions associate with life in the land given by Yhwh to
Israel. Life in Babylon is on a par with that in Judah.

At the same time Babylon is also represented as a figure op-
posed to Judah. In Jeremiah 27 MT it is the conqueror to whom
Judah must submit. In Jeremiah 29 MT Babylon is depicted as a
place quite distinct from Judah. It is not just the place from which
those deported in 597 will return, but is a metaphor for banish-
ment. It represents the situation of those in diaspora also. Baby-
lon is the place from which both the exiles of 597 and all those
in diaspora will return to begin a renewed life in Judah. Within
chaps. 27 MT and 29 MT there is tension, characteristic of meta-
phor, between identity and difference in the representation of
Babylon.

In this chapter the study proceeds by first describing the set-
ting of Jeremiah 27 and 29 MT, and then takes up in detail the
passages in chaps. 27 and 29 MT in which the figure of Babylon
appears. Although the theme of submission to Babylon contin-

---

[1] In Jeremiah 27-29 MT, the spelling of the Babylonian king's name chang-
es from נבוכדראצר to נבוכדנאצר. Hence the change in my text at this point from
"Nebuchadrezzar" to "Nebuchadnezzar".

ues from chap. 27 into chap. 28, the principal insights are found in the former chapter. For this reason, and for reasons of space, chap. 28 is not taken up in its own right.

1. *The Context of Jeremiah 27 and 29 MT*

These chapters belong to the section of the book which begins in chap. 26 and ends in chap. 36.[2] A characteristic peculiar to this section of the book is the presence of material which refers to a return of the exiles to the land. Among the chapters which contain promises of restoration are chaps. 27 and 29. At the same time these chapters also contain very important references to Babylon. What is particularly significant is that in texts which refer to the end of Babylonian domination and a return to the land, the figure of Babylon is still presented in an extraordinarily favourable light.

Chaps. 27 and 29 are linked by a common theme – the prophetic opposition to Jeremiah.[3] The events narrated in the chapters are set in the reign of Zedekiah. Both chaps. 27 and 28 are set at the beginning of his reign, while chap. 29 is set at some unspecified date between the deportations of 597 and 587.[4]

---

[2] For chaps. 26–36 as a section in the book, see above, 97-99.

[3] On chaps. 27–29 as a section, see Cornill, *Jeremia*, 303; Graupner, *Auftrag und Geschick*, 61-62; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 114; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 337; Nötscher, *Jeremia*, 200-201; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 172-173; Thiel, *Jeremiah 26-45*, 11; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 528-529; Weiser, *Jeremia*, 244-245.

[4] Reading בראשית ממלכת לצדקיהו ("in the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah") in 27:1 where the MT has בראשית ממלכת יהויקם ("in the beginning of the reign of King Jehoiakim"). The former reading is suggested by BHS and found in the Syriac, the Vulgate and some Hebrew manuscripts. For this position see also Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 526; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 113; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 529; Wanke, *Untersuchungen*, 19.

The difficulty with the MT's regnal formula of Jehoiakim is that the events of the entire chapter are set in the reign of Zedekiah. The superscription in 28:1 also suggests that an emendation is required in 27:1 because the events in chap. 28 are set in the same year as those in chap. 27: ויהי בשנה ההיא בראשית ממלכת צדקיה ("In that same year, at the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah" – 28:1).

Schenker has argued that the present reading has the function of correlating a prophetic message with the beginning of the rule of three different rulers: the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's rule – 25:1; the beginning of Zedekiah's rule – 27:12; 28:1; the beginning of Jehoiakim's rule – 27:1 ("Nebukadnezzars Metamorphose," 512). However his proposal does not address the issue

2. *Babylon in Jeremiah 27 MT*

The central theme of Jeremiah 27 MT is the power of Yhwh over the destiny of all nations. The figure of Babylon has to be considered against this backdrop.

There are several facets to the figure of Babylon in the chapter. It is firstly represented metonymically by its king, Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 1-15), and secondly as a land to which Judah is banished (vv. 16-22). Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed as some one of extremely high standing, given by Yhwh a preeminent position of authority and power over the created world. At the same time the period of the Babylonian king's dominance is limited, and he will in turn be subjugated by unnamed conquerors.

Jeremiah 27 MT is built around the interpretation of a prophetic symbolic act by Jeremiah, which was directed to the ambassadors of Judah's neighbours.[5]. The first part of the chapter consists of a superscription (v. 1), the command to perform a symbolic action (vv. 2-3) and its significance (vv. 4-8). Vv. 9-22 are a series of exhortations addressed to: the foreign kings through their ambassadors (vv. 9-11), to Zedekiah (vv. 12-15), to the priests and the people (vv. 16-22).[6] The chapter is held together by the repetition of the expressions אל־תשמעו ("Do not listen" – vv. 9, 14, 16) and כי שקר הם [המה] נבאים לכם ("for they are prophesying a lie to you" – vv. 10, 14, 16). The latter reflects an important

---

of the tension between 27:1, which refers to the reign of Jehoiakim, and 27:3, which situates the narrative in the reign of Zedekiah.

[5] The occasion may have been a meeting in Jerusalem in which Zedekiah and the neighbouring states were planning a revolt against Babylon: so, e.g., Bright, *Jeremiah*, 201; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 118; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 173; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 531. However, Carroll argues that the passage cannot be situated against this historical background because of the unlikelihood of any revolt against Nebuchadnezzar at this time (*Jeremiah*, 530). McKane is also cautious about situating the passage against such a background (*Jeremiah*, 2:685).

[6] The above is similar to the division proposed by Wanke, *Untersuchungen*, 24-26. His analysis omits v. 4 because it is a seam which joins two units which originally did not belong together (*ibid.*, 25). The present study sees v. 4 as an introduction to the interpretation of the symbolic action. In his analysis of this chapter, Overholt proposes vv. 3-11 as a unit (Thomas W. Overholt, *The Threat of Falsehood*, [SBT Second Series 16; London: SCM, 1970] 34-35). However, since vv. 9-11 have a similar exhortatory function as vv. 12-15 and vv. 16-22, it is preferable to regard vv. 3-8 as a unit. A division of the chapter based on the change in addressee for vv. 11-22 is also given by Helga Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde: ein Beitrag zur Theologie des Jeremiabuches*, (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 102; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1981) 66.

theme in chaps. 27–29 – the prophetic opposition to Jeremiah. The theme of serving the king of Babylon ties vv. 4-15 together, while that of the temple vessels joins vv. 16-18 to vv. 19-22.

2.1. *Babylon in vv. 4-8, 9-11 MT*

In vv. 4-8 and 9-11 Babylon is represented here by its king Nebuchadnezzar, who as metonymic figure stands for the whole nation. These verses present two aspects of the Babylonian king's portrait. The first is that he is a figure of extraordinary standing with power and authority over all the created world (vv. 4-7; 8-11). The second is that his position of power is for a limited time (v. 7).

V. 4 is introduced by the phrase כה־אמר יהוה צבאות אליהי ישראל (Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel"). While its use of the messenger formula provides a link back to v. 2, there is however an important difference. Where v. 2 has כה אמר יהוה and is addressed to Jeremiah, v. 4 has כה אמר יהוה צבאות אלהי ישראל and is addressed to the ambassadors of the foreign kings. The difference underscores that what follows is the word of Israel's own God, who lays claim to an authority that extends beyond Israel itself to the surrounding nations. As in Jeremiah 25 MT, the action against Judah is situated in the broader context of Yhwh's control over world events.

Vv. 5-8 are the explanation of the symbolic action of v. 2, in which Jeremiah is to wear an ox yoke to symbolise the subjection of Judah's neigbours to Babylon.[7] Vv. 5-7 reveal an extraordinary

---

[7] While the directive in v. 2 is clear, there is some uncertainty about the meaning of שלחתם at the beginning of v. 3. V. 2 directs Jeremiah: עשה לך מוסרות ומטות ונתתם על־צוארך ("Make yourself a yoke of straps and bars, and put them on your neck"). V. 3 then begins ושלחתם אל־מלך אדום ואל־מלך מואב ("and send them to the king of Edom and the king of Moab..."). The difficulty is with the referent of the object suffix in the verb שלחתם. The NRSV, following the Lucian recension of the LXX, translates שלחתם as "send word", an interpretation also suggested by McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:684.

However Holladay's treatment of v. 2 makes it clear that the meaning of "send them" for שלחתם makes good sense (*Jeremiah*, 2:119-120). What Jeremiah is to send is not the yoke, but an apparatus like a collar, to which the yoke itself was attached. The collar consisted of מוסרות ("cords") and מטות ("yoke-pegs"). As Holladay correctly notes, the word על ("yoke") is not used to describe what Jeremiah put on his neck (*ibid.*, 120). The merit of Holladay's approach is that the present text can be satisfactorily accounted for, and that the emendation שלחה, which McKane's solution requires, is not necessary (McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:684).

portrait of Nebuchadnezzar. What is startling here is not so much
that Yhwh has given Nebuchadnezzar a position of dominance over
Judah and its neighbours, but rather the language and imagery
which is used in the portrait of the Babylonian king.

V. 5 is a statement about the supreme power of Yhwh:

v. 5 It is I who by my great	אנכי עשׂיתי את־הארץ
power and my outstretched arm	את־האדם ואת־הבהמה
have made the earth, with the	אשר על־פני הארץ
people and animals that are on	בכחי הגדול ובזרועי הנטויה
the earth, and I give it to	ונתתיה
whomever I please.	לאשר ישר בעיני:
(Jer 27:5)	

The affirmation of Yhwh as creator of the world and its supreme
ruler provides the theological foundation for what follows in vv.
6-8:

v. 6 Now I have given all	ועתה אנכי נתתי
these lands into the hand of	את־כל־הארצות האלה
King Nebuchadnezzar of	ביד נבוכדנאצר
Babylon, my servant, and I	מלך־בבל עבדי
have given him even the wild	וגם את־חית השדה
animals of the field to serve	נתתי לו
him.	לעבדו:
v. 7 All the nations shall	ועבדו אתו כל־הגוים
serve him and his son and his	ואת־בנו ואת־בן־בנו
grandson, until the time of	עד בא־עת ארצו
his own land comes; then many	גם־הוא
nations and great kings shall	ועבדו בו גוים רבים
make him their slave.	ומלכים גדלים
v. 8 But if any nation or	והיה הגוי והממלכה
kingdom will not serve this	אשר לא־יעבדו אתו
king, Nebuchadnezzar of	את־נבוכדנאצר
Babylon, and put its neck	מלך־בבל
under the yoke of the king of	ואת אשר לא־יתן את־צוארו
Babylon, then I will punish	בעל מלך בבל
that nation with the sword,	בחרב וברעב ובדבר
with famine, and with	אפקד על־הגוי ההוא
pestilence, says the LORD,	נאם־יהוה
until I have completed its	עד־תמי אתם בידו:
destruction by his hand.	
(Jer 27:6-8 MT)	

There are in vv. 5 and 6 traces of four of Judah's important theo-
logical traditions that are used in the text's portrait of Nebuchad-

nezzar: creation, the deliverance from Egypt, the kingship, and the patriarchal promises.[8]

The first aspect of Yhwh's power identified in v. 5 is his role as creator, as indicated by the phrase עשׂה ארץ with Yhwh as subject.[9] In v. 5 the verb עשׂה in v. 5 has three direct objects: the more extensive ארץ ("earth"), which supports the existence of two different forms of life, אדם ("people") and בהמה ("animals").[10]

The second aspect identified is his role as the one who brought the people out of Egypt. The exodus traditions are represented by בכחי גדול ובזרועי נטיוה ("by my great power and outstretched arm").[11] The use of אנכי ("I") as the explicit grammatical subject of עשׂיתי ("I have made") further emphasises his control. V. 5 brings together two different dimensions of the divinity.[12] The God of creation, who is also the God of the Exodus, is about to act.

---

[8] As Wanke notes, v. 5 is a theological premise which has historical consequences (vv. 6-7), a concrete expression of which is the identification of Nebuchadrezzar in v. 8 (*Untersuchungen*, 25).

[9] As is generally recognised by e.g., Brueggemann, *To Build, To Plant*, 15; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 119; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 174; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 522-523.

[10] Schenker, "Nebukadnezzars Metamorphose," 500. In her analysis of Jer 27:5 MT Weippert argues that בהמה refers only to domesticated animals (*Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 69). Her argument is based on the use of the expressions חית השׂדה and בהמה in the OT. Citing Gen 2:19,20; 3:1,14; Exod 23:11 and Ps 104:11, she argues that חית השׂדה refers to wild animals and בהמה to domesticated animals. (*ibid.*). However a closer examination of these texts and others not cited by her shows that the expressions have a wider range of meaning. Gen 2:19 reads: ויצר יהוה אלהים מן־האדמה כל־חית השׂדה ואת כל־עוף השׁמים ("So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air"). Here חית השׂדה refers to all land animals in contrast to those who live in the sky. Then in v. 20, different categories appear: ויקרא האדם שׁמות לכל־ הבהמה ולעוף השׁמים ולכל חית השׂדה ("The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field"). חית השׂדה is now distinguished from בהמה. The fluid nature of the language here is recognised by Botterweck and Westermann: G. Johannes Botterweck, "בהמה", *TDOT*, 2:7-11; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 227.

This phenomenon is apparent again in 3:1,14, where חית השׂדה refers simply to all of the creatures Yhwh made: ערום מכל חית השׂדה אשׁר עשׂה יהוה אלהים ("now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made"). For this, see von Rad, *Genesis*, 87; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 239. For a list of a range of meanings for בהמה, including that of "wild beast", see *Gesenius' Lexicon*, 105. Finally, and most importantly, the structure of Jer 27:6a would also suggest that בהמה is a collective noun which with אדם embraces the totality of living beings on the earth.

[11] For occurrences of this expression, see Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 67 n. 9; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974) 329.

[12] As noted by Wanke, *Untersuchungen*, 25 n. 17.

V. 5 concludes with the statement that Yhwh can give the earth
לאשר ישר בעיני ("to whomever is pleasing in my eyes").[13] The phrase
ישר בעיני expresses the absolute power of Yhwh, as its occurrence
in Jer 18:4 shows. Here the potter, who is a metaphor for Yhwh,
works the clay כאשר ישר בעיני ("just as it was pleasing in his eyes").
While the story of the potter is a parable addressed to Judah (vv.
6, 11), it represents Yhwh as a God whose power extends beyond
Judah: רגע אדבר על־גוי ועל־ממלכה ("At one moment I may declare
concerning a nation or a kingdom..." – 18:7). The lesson about
Yhwh's power over Judah is situated against an understanding that
the power of Judah's God extends over all the nations.[14] Even
the foreign conqueror can be judged by Yhwh as ישר בעיני.

The phrase also recalls the history of Israel's kings. In the Deu-
teronomistic history ישר בעיני occurs as part of the regnal formu-
la used to evaluate the reign of the kings. David's reign is evalu-
ated in 1 Kings 15:5: אשר עשה דוד את־הישר בעיני יהוה ("because
David did what was pleasing in the eyes of the LORD").[15] Apart
from David, well known kings to whom this favourable judgment
was applied include Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:3) and Josiah (22:2).[16]
The implication of Jer 27:5 is that Nebuchadnezzar is ישר בעיני,
and so he has a standing comparable to the great kings.

Furthermore, as in 25:9 MT, Nebuchadnezzar is designated in
27:6 MT as עבדי ("my servant"), a term which also links him to
the figure of David.[17] 27:5-6 is a further example of that process
found earlier in Jeremiah 25 MT, in which important images from
Judah's sacred traditions are used to describe a foreign king and
conqueror.

V. 6 also contains an echo of the patriarchal promises. The
expression נתן ארץ, found in v. 6, is used in the book of Genesis
in the context of the promise of the land to the patriarchs. In
Gen 26:3, which refers to the promise of land to Isaac and his

---

[13] This more literal translation will be used in the following discussion of
the phrase, because it better highlights the point at issue than the NRSV's trans-
lation – "to whomever I please".
   [14] For the view that 18:7-11 refer to nations see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 372; Thiel,
Jeremia 1-25, 214-216; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 434;
   [15] Again a more literal translation highlights the point better than the NRSV's
"because David did what was right in the sight of the LORD".
   [16] Other kings judged favourably are Asa (1 Kings 15:1); Jehoshaphat (22:43);
Jehu (2 Kings 10:30); Jehoash (12:3); Amaziah (14:3); Azariah (15:3); Jothan
(15:34).
   [17] For the discussion of 25:9 MT, see above 106-110.

descendants, נתן is found with the plural form of ארץ, as in Jer
27:6: כי־לך ולזרעך אתן את־כל־הארצת האל ("for to you and your de-
scendants I will give all these lands").[18] However here the reci-
pient of the promise is not Judah, but its conqueror.

The creation traditions are also reflected in v. 6 to describe
Nebuchadnezzar: וגם את־חית השדה נתתי לו לעבדו ("and I have giv-
en him also the wild animals of the field to serve him"). The idea
of a human being with power over all creation, together with the
expression חית השדה ("the wild animals of the fields") and the
root עבד ("to serve", "to work", "to till"), links v. 6 to the creation
story in Genesis 2. חית השדה occurs in 2:20, according to which
the first human was given authority over the created world:
ויקרא האדם שמות לכל־הבהמה ולעוף השמים ולכל חית השדה ("The man
gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every
animal of the field"). The root עבד is found in 2:15: ויקה יהוה
אלהים את־האדם וינההו בגן־עדן לעבדה ("The LORD God took the man
and put him in the garden of Eden to till it"). The significance
of the links between Jer 27:6 and Genesis 2 is that the standing
of the first human in the garden is shared by Nebuchadnezzar.

The presence of root עבד in both Jeremiah 27 MT and Gene-
sis 2 takes on further significance in the light of Jer 27:7-8 MT.
Nebuchadnezzar's position of dominance is clearly stated at the
beginning of v. 7: ועבדו אתו כל־הגוים ("all the nations shall serve
him"). In v. 8 the meaning of עבד is developed: והיה הגוי והממלכה
אשר לא־יעבדו אתו...ואת אשר לא־יתן את־צוארו בעל מלך בבל ("But if
any nation or kingdom will not serve him...and put its neck un-
der the yoke of the king of Babylon").[19] The relationship of the
nations to the Babylonian king, indicated by עבד, is that of a yoked
animal to its master. In this light the reference to Nebuchadnez-
zar's power in v. 6b has an even sharper edge. If he is given con-

---

[18] Reading האלה for האל: so, Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (7. Auflage, 1966; Göt-
tingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1901) 300; von Rad, *Genesis*, 268; Wester-
mann, *Genesis 12-36*, 421-422.

The themes of the promise of land and the blessing for the nations connects
Gen 26:2-5 back to the promises made to Abraham in Gen 12:7; 15:7, 18. These
latter verses have the more common combination of נתן with the singular form
of ארץ. The phrase is also common in the book of Deuteronomy, where in a
number of places the entry into the land is seen as the fulfilment of the prom-
ises to the patriarchal ancestors: e.g., 1:8, 21; 6:23; 9:6; 11:9, 21; 19:8.

[19] Translation mine. The NRSV translates the emphatic אתו as "this [King
Nebuchadnezzar]".

trol over חית השדה, an expression whose meaning includes wild animals, then how much more certain is his power over animals who are yoked.[20]

At the same time Nebuchadnezzar is a subordinate figure to Yhwh. The fate of Babylon here is the same as that in 25:14 MT, subjugation to unnamed nations: ועבדו בו גוים רבים ומלכים גדלים ("then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave" – 27:7). In v. 7 the period of Babylonian dominance is fixed as three generations. The repetition of אנכי ("I") in vv. 5 and 6 emphasises Yhwh's control. Although Nebuchadnezzar is given great power and an elevated status, he is essentially a passive figure in the text. He neither speaks nor acts. Yhwh is in control.

The passive figure of Nebuchadnezzar also does no wrong. There is no suggestion here in chap. 27, as there is in chap. 25 MT, that Babylon is guilty of any offence against Yhwh. What happens here in Jeremiah 27 MT stands in contrast to the portrait of Babylon in a passage such as Isaiah 46, whose portrait of the absolute sovereignty of Yhwh is accompanied by a satirical attack on the Babylonian deities and their impotence (46:1-7). Similarly views that Babylon has acted oppressively (Isa 47:5-7) or attempted to usurp Yhwh's position (vv. 10-11) are not found in Jeremiah 27 MT. Even in the context of a prediction about the end of its domination, Babylon is neither demonised nor accused nor humiliated as it is in Isaiah 46–48.

The very positive portrait of Nebuchadnezzar in 27:4-8 MT is shared by 34:4-8 LXX, but with two differences. One is the absence in the LXX of a single term equivalent to the Hebrew root עבד, so that the important word play on עבד is not represented in the LXX. The second is the absence of any reference in the LXX to the limits of Babylonian domination. As in 25:9 LXX there is no equivalent in 34:6 LXX for the designation עבדי. Where the MT uses the single root עבד, the LXX uses two: ἔδωκα τὴν γῆν τῷ Ναβουχοδονοσορ βασιλεῖ Βαβυλῶνος δουλεύειν αὐτῷ καὶ τὰ θηρία τοῦ ἀγροῦ ἐργάζεσθαι αὐτῷ ("I gave the earth to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon to serve him and the beasts of the field to work for him"). Where the MT has עבדי in v. 6a, the LXX uses the verb δουλεύειν ("to serve"). Where the MT has לעבדו ("to serve

---

[20] So, Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 119.

him") in v. 6b, the LXX uses the verb ἐργάζομαι ("to work", "to carry out").

What is also missing from the LXX is any equivalent for v. 7 MT, in which the root עבד is used twice—once to describe the subjugation of the nations to the Babylonian king, and once to describe the latter's subjugation to unnamed nations. Similarly in v. 8 the LXX has no equivalent of the root עבד, and uses only the image of the yoke to express the subjugation of the nations to the Babylonian king: καὶ τὸ ἔθνος καὶ ἡ βασιλεία ὅσοι ἐὰν μὴ ἐμβάλωσιν τὸν τράχηλον αὐτῶν ὑπὸ τὸν ζυγὸν βασιλέως Βαβυλῶνος ("And the nation and the kingdom which does not submit their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon"). Most significantly, the absence of v. 7 means that in vv. 4-8 LXX there is no reference to the limits of Babylonian domination.[21]

A final characteristic of Babylon in vv. 4-8 is its role as Yhwh's agent of punishment. V. 8 deals with the consequences of a nation's refusal to submit to Nebuchadnezzar: בחרב וברעב ובדבר אפקד על־הגוי ההוא נאם־יהוה עד־תמי אתם בידו ("then I will punish that nation with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, says the LORD, until I have completed their destruction by his hand").[22]

_____

[21] The following expressions found in the MT of vv. 4-8 are not represented in the LXX: את־האדם ואת־הבהמה אשר על־פני הארץ ("with people and animals that are on the face of the earth" – v. 5); ועתה אנכי ("now I" – v. 6); את־כל־הארצות האלה ("all these lands" – v. 6). All of v. 7 MT is missing from the LXX. Where the MT has עבדי in v. 6, the LXX reads δουλεύειν αὐτῷ ("to serve him").

[22] The word תמי, pointed as תֻּמִּי in BHS, is an infinitive construct of תמם ("to be complete", "to complete") with the first person suffix (so, BDB, 1070; S. Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae* [Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1964] 1247). This reading causes difficulties for some critics who argue that a translation "until I have completed their destruction by his hand" does not fit well because תמם is not a transitive verb (so, Bright, *Jeremiah*, 200; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 113; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:691; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 177; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 534).

Various solutions to the difficulty are offered. One is to emend תֻּמִּי to תִּתִּי, as suggested in the critical apparatus of BHS and supported by the Syriac and Targum (Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 177; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 534). Against this Holladay argues that it is difficult to see how תֻּמִּי could be transmitted as תִּתִּי. He proposes that by haplography תתי was omitted in the MT, and by haplography in the Targum תמי fell out. His proposed reading is חמי תתי אתם בידו: "until I have finished giving them into his hand" (*Jeremiah 1*, 113). Another solution is the emendation of תמי to התמי, proposed with some reservation by McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:684.

However the pointing תֻּמִּי could well stand as it is. While the use of תמם in a transitive sense may not be usual, the context does support the MT better than it does the solution of Holladay. The presence of "sword, famine and pestilence"

As in Jer 21:1-7, the figures of Yhwh and Nebuchadnezzar are closely identified. It is Yhwh's punishment realised by the hand of the Babylonian king.

In vv. 9-11 there is a shift in focus from the portrait of Nebuchadnezzar to the themes of submission and the consequences of its refusal. The consequences of both are articulated in v. 11, where the root עבד is again a key term:

But any nation that will bring	והגוי אשר
its neck under the yoke of the	יביא את־צוארו
king of Babylon and serve him,	בעל מלך־בבל
I will leave on its own land,	ועבדו והנחתיו
says the LORD, to till it and	על אדמתו
live there.	נאם־יהוה
(Jer 27:11 MT)	ועבדה וישב בה:

The expression נאם־יהוה ("says the LORD") connects two consequences of submission. The first is expressed by נוח *hifil* ("to give rest") with אדמה ("land"); the second by a play on the meanings of עבד.

The phrase נוח *hifil* with אדמה echoes the Deuteronomic concept of the rest which is associated with Israel's possession of the land.[23] It is promised to the people as they are about to enter the land: וישבתם בארץ אשר־יהוה אלהיכם מנחיל אתכם והניח לכם מכל־איביכם מסביב וישבתם־בטח ("When you...live in the land that the LORD your God is allotting to you, and when he gives you rest from your enemies all around so that you live in safety" – Deut 12:10). Joshua refers to this promise before the conquest of the land begins (Josh 1:13, 15), and Israel is said to possess rest when the conquest was successfully completed (21:44; 22:4; 23:1).[24] Jer 27:11 gives an ironic twist to the promise of rest. It is now to be obtained by submission to an enemy.

The second consequence of submission is elaborated in v. 11 by a wordplay on the two meanings of עבד, "to serve" and "to till":

---

earlier in the verse – all suggestive of death – works against Holladay's emendation. "Until I have consumed them", with its suggestion of finality, represents this better than "until I have finished giving them into his hand". Any emendation is therefore not necessary.

[23] On the concept of rest see Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 226-227; Gerhard von Rad, "There Remains Still a Rest for the People of God: An Investigation of a Biblical Conception," *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: SCM, 1966) 94-102; also his *Deuteronomy* (OTL; London: SCM, 1966) 92-93.

[24] For occurrences of נוח *hifil* in relation to the possession of the land, see Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 343.

הגוי אשר...וְעָבְדוּ והנחתיו על־אדמתו...וְעָבְדָהּ ("any nation that...*will serve him* [the king of Babylon], I will leave on its own land *to till it*"). To *serve* the king means that a nation will be left to till or *serve* its own land.[25] The use of the word על ("yoke") adds another nuance. In putting on the yoke and submitting to Babylon, a nation becomes like a beast of burden. The full implication of v. 6b can now be appreciated. If the Babylonian king is given power over חית השׂדה, an expression that includes both wild and tame animals, how more certain then is his control over an animal that is yoked. For the nations, to be settled and secure in their lands requires their submission to Nebuchadnezzar.

There are several aspects to the figure of Babylon in vv. 4-8. Represented by the figure of its king, it is portrayed as a figure like Judah. Images from Judah's sacred traditions are used to portray an enemy king. It is Yhwh, for Judah the God of creation and the God of the Exodus, who gives Nebuchadnezzar a standing akin to the eponymous human ancestor in the garden. It is this same God who judges the foreign king to be ישׁר בעיני ("pleasing in my eyes"). The use of this designation for Nebuchadnezzar gives him a standing equal to the best of Judah's rulers. Furthermore as the recipient of the gift of land from Yhwh, the patriarchal promises are fulfilled in him.

What is extraordinary in vv. 4-8 is that these expressions of Yhwh's favour are given to Judah's conqueror. While vv. 4-8 do contain the language of submission (vv. 7-8), such language plays only a secondary role. What is dominant is the association of the Babylonian king, and hence of Babylon itself, with Judah's sacred traditions. The application of these traditions to the figure of Babylon brings about an association between it and Judah. Babylon metaphorically becomes another Judah, replacing it as the nation with the particular relationship with Yhwh. The consigning of Judah to a fate of submission to Babylon and punishment by Yhwh, developed further in vv. 9-11 and 12-15 completes the switch.

In vv. 9-11, in which the theme of submission to Babylon is continued, the Deuteronomic understanding of rest is given an ironic twist. Rest is now associated with submission to the con-

---

[25] The word play is recognised by Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 121; Schenker, "Nebukadnezzars Metamorphose," 506.

queror rather than the free and full possession of the land promised by Yhwh.

At the same time, the standing of Babylon is not permanent. Its period of domination is fixed as three generations, and then it too will be slave to its captors. The point of difference between a Babylon which is Yhwh's favoured nation and a Judah with the same status, is that Babylon's accession to such a status is only limited. Implicit in the prediction of Babylon's demise may be a hope for Judah's restoration, the incipient and oblique character of which is left without elaboration in vv. 4-8.

By the appropriation of images from Judah's sacred traditions, Babylon in 27:4-9, 9-11 MT is represented as a metaphor for Judah whom it replaces as the nation especially favoured by Yhwh. At the same time Babylon's elevated status is only of limited duration. V. 7 predicts an end to Babylonian domination.

2.2. *Babylon in vv. 12-15, 16-22 MT*

The use of the root עבד provides a link between these verses and what precedes. It also opens up a different understanding of the figure of Babylon. There are two aspects to the figure of Babylon in these verses. In the first (vv. 12-15), another ironic twist is given to the Deuteronomic promise of the land: life for Judah is again associated with submission to Babylon. In the second (vv. 16-22), Babylon is identified as the place of banishment.

Vv. 12-15, although addressed to Zedekiah, are directed at a more extensive audience than the Judean king, as the use of plural verb forms and suffixes indicates. What is most significant here is the combination of the two imperatives עבדו ("serve") and חיו ("live") in v. 12: הביאו את־צואריכם בעל מלך־בבל ועבדו אתו ועמו וחיו ("bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live"). The idea that submission to a foreign ruler is the condition of the people's continued existence alludes to the narrative of the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem in 2 Kings 18.

Thematically, Jeremiah 27 MT and 2 Kings 18 are similar. Not only are both concerned with the question of submission to an invading power, but there are also similarities of language, particularly between Jer 27:12-15 and 2 Kings 18:31-32. Both passages contain the masculine imperative plural חיו ("live!"), a form of

חיה ("to live") not common in the OT.[26] In Jer 27:14 the prophet warns Zedekiah: אל־תשמעו אל־דברי הנבאים ("do not listen to the words of the prophets"). In 2 Kings 18:31-32 the Rabshakeh issues a similar warning to the inhabitants of Jerusalem:

Do not listen to Hezekiah; for	אל תשמעו אל־חזקיהו
thus says the king of Assyria:	כי כה אמר מלך אשור
"Make your peace with me and	עשו אתי ברכה
come out to me...	וצאו אלי...
until I come and take you away	עד־באי ולקחתי אתכם
to a land like your own land,	אל־ארץ כארצכם
a land of grain and wine,	ארץ דגן ותירוש
a land of bread and vineyards,	ארץ לחם וכרמים
a land of olive oil and honey,	ארץ זית יצהר ודבש
that you may live and not	וחיו
die..."	ולא תמתו
(2 Kings 18:31-32)	

Paradoxically, the advice attached to the warnings in 2 Kings 18 is exactly the opposite to that in Jeremiah 27 MT. Where Isaiah counsels Hezekiah to stand against the invader, Jeremiah directs Zedekiah to submit.[27] The point at issue in Jer 27:12-15 is that Yhwh's deliverance of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah will not be repeated here. As in 21:1-10, Zedekiah is no Hezekiah, and Nebuchadnezzar is no Sennacherib.

---

[26] The other instances are in Gen 42:18; Num 31:18; Ezek 18:32; Amos 5:4, 6; Prov 9:6

[27] The conflicting advice given by the two prophets forms an important part of Hardmeier's thesis that the narrative in 2 Kings 18–20 was composed around 588 when the Babylonian siege against Jerusalem was temporarily lifted (Christof Hardmeier, *Prophetie im Streit vor dem Untergang Judas: erzählkommunikative Studien zur Entstehungssituation der Jesaja- und Jeremiaerzählungen in II Reg 18-20 und Jer 37-40* [BZAW 187; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1990]). 2 Kings 18–20 was intended as a counter to Jeremiah's advice to surrender to the Babylonians. According to this view, the figure of the Rabshake in 2 Kings 18–20 actually represents Jeremiah. The advice to surrender in Jeremiah 38 is countered by the composition of the Rabshakeh speech in 2 Kings 18:31-35. The implication then is that Zedekiah should follow the example of Hezekiah and stand firm, rather than to follow the advice of this new "Rabshake". For Hardmeier's detailed analysis, see *ibid.*, 321-406.

An analysis of Hardmeier's detailed and complex thesis would take us beyond the limits of the present study. His work, and other studies of the parallels between the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and that of Sennacherib, are well analysed by Boyle and Seitz. Boyle's evaluation of Hardmeier's work is found in his *Fire in the City*, 369-403. Seitz's evaluation is found in his *Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah: A Reassessment of Isaiah 36-39* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) esp. 119-148.

The Rabshakeh's speech in 2 Kings 18:28-35 contains ironic echoes of the promise of land in Deut 8:7-9. In calling on the people of Jerusalem to surrender, the Rabshake offers them the chance to experience in Assyria the same good life associated in the Deuteronomic promises with life in the land of Israel.[28] Where the parody of the Deuteronomic promise in 2 Kings 18:28-35 is seen to be arrogant and empty, that in Jer 27:12-15 has the authority of the prophetic word behind it.

There is also a further ironic twist to the Deuteronomic promises in Jer 27:12-15. Life in the Deuteronomic traditions is essentially linked to the full and free possession of the land: ובחרת בחיים למען תחיה אתה וזרעך לאהבה את־יהוה אלהיך...כי הוא חייך וארך ימים לשבת על־האדמה ("choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God...for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land" – Deut 30:19-20).[29] In Jer 27:12-15 it is submission which is presented as life: הביאו את־צואריכם בעל מלך־בבל ועבדו אתו ועמו וחיו ("bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people and live" – v. 12). A similar idea is found in 21:1-10, where it was surrender to the Babylonians which constituted the way of life for those under siege in Jerusalem.[30]

In vv. 16-22 a different facet of the figure of Babylon emerges, that of a place of banishment. Vv. 16-22 are addressed to the priests and the people.[31] Like vv. 12-15 they contain the same warning about listening to the prophets (vv. 14, 16), and the same command to submit (vv. 12, 17). However vv. 16-22 addresses the implied prediction by Jeremiah's prophetic opponents of the return to the land of the temple vessels, which Nebuchadnezzar took to Babylon after the siege of 597. Their return signifies the restoration of worship and normal life in Judah.[32]

---

[28] So, Peter R. Ackroyd, "An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile: A Study of II Kings 20 and Isaiah 38-39," *Studies in the Religious Tradition of the Old Testament* 168; Hardmeier, *Prophetie im Streit*, 370.

[29] So, e.g., P. Diepold, *Israels Land* (BWANT 15; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1972) 187; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 80-81; Gerhard von Rad, "The Promised Land and Yahweh's Land in the Hexateuch," *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966) 92-93.

[30] See above, 75-85.

[31] As Holladay intimates, the priests are singled out in v. 16 perhaps because the temple vessels are the focus of the oracle which follows (*Jeremiah 2*, 122).

[32] For the temple vessels as a symbol of continuity with the past see Peter R. Ackroyd, "The Temple Vessels: A Continuity Theme," *Studies in the Religious Traditions of the Old Testament*, 46-60; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 536.

The promise of their return is countered by an oracle of Jeremiah in vv. 19-22, which predicts a further attack on Jerusalem and the removal of those temple vessels which remained after the disaster of 597: בבלה יובאו ושמה יהיו עד יום פקדי אתם נאם־יהוה והעליתים והשיבתים אל־המקום הזה ("to Babylon they shall be carried, and there they shall stay, until the day when I give attention to them, says the LORD. Then I will bring them up and restore them to this place" – Jer 27:22).[33] The necessity of a further deportation is highlighted in v. 22, in which בבלה ("to Babylon") has the position of emphasis.[34]

The prediction by Jeremiah of the temple vessel's return differs from that of his opponents in that the events of 587 must happen before a return is possible. It stands in contrast to the prediction of Hananiah in 28:2-4, which announces the return not only of the temple vessels but also of Jeconiah and all those deported in 597. In Jer 27:16 however, the return refers only to the temple vessels. The absence of any reference to the people deported in 597 gives the prediction a muted and oblique character, as does its absence of any temporal indicator. What is predicted is the return of objects which as symbols express only indirectly the restoration of the exiles to a full life in the land.

There are differences in vv. 12-15 and 16-22 between the MT and LXX, which highlight the particular perspective of the former. The most significant is the absence in the LXX of any reference to a return of the temple vessels. The prediction in v. 22 MT is not found in the corresponding place in the LXX, which also has no equivalent for v. 21 MT.[35] In reference to the temple vessels, 34:22 LXX reads simply: εἰς Βαβυλῶνα εἰσελεύσεται λέγει κύριος ("to Babylon they shall be carried, says the LORD"). The absence of any reference to a return is consistent with the earlier part of chap. 34 LXX, which has no equivalent to v. 7 MT and its prediction of an end to Babylonian domination.

Another difference is in vv. 12-15, in which an equivalent for

---

[33] Translation mine. Here the NRSV does not reflect the position of emphasis given to בבלה in the MT.

[34] The emphatic phrase בבלה יובאו ושמה יהיו is very similar to that found in 20:7 in which Pashhur is threatened with exile: ובבלה תבוא ושם תמות ("and to Babylon you shall go; there shall you die"). For this, see Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 123.

[35] As is commonly recognised, e.g., by Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 536-537; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 114; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 177; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 530.

חיו ("live" – v. 12) is not found in the LXX. In the MT v. 12 con-
cludes הביאו את־צואריכם בעל מלך־בבל ועבדו אתו ועמו וחיו ("Bring
your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him
and his people, and live"). In the LXX the conclusion of v. 12 is
followed directly by the equivalent of v. 14 MT: εἰσαγάγετε τὸν
τράχηλον ὑμῶν καὶ ἐργάσασθε τῷ βασιλεῖ Βαβυλῶνος ("bring your
necks and serve the king of Babylon"). The equivalent of v. 13
MT is not found in the LXX. The absence of an equivalent for
חיו removes from the LXX a significant element of the parody on
the Deuteronomic promises found in vv. 12-15 MT.

2.3. *Conclusions*

The central theme of Jeremiah 27 MT is the sovereignty of Yhwh.
Against this backdrop the figure of Babylon in vv. 4-8, 9-11 is de-
scribed with images drawn from Judah's sacred traditions, the ef-
fect of which is to bring about a metaphorical association between
the former and the latter. Babylon, not Judah, is the nation which
has a privileged relationship with Yhwh.

In vv. 4-8 Babylon is represented by the metonymic figure of
Nebuchadnezzar, who is portrayed as a figure like the first hu-
man in the garden of Genesis 2–3, as a king who is the equiva-
lent of the greatest of Judah's rulers, and as the recipient of the
patriarchal promise made to Isaac and his descendants. This stag-
gering portrait of the pagan conqueror is presented as the plan
of Yhwh, Judah's God who lays claim to exclusive power over the
affairs of the created world. Yhwh now regards Babylon in the
same way as he once did Judah.

While Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed in both textual traditions
as having a position of extraordinary standing, the use of the epithet
עבדי means that the MT highlights this more than the LXX, which
lacks any equivalent to it. Similarly the presence in v. 5 MT of
the phrase את־האדם ואת־הבהמה אשר על־פני הארץ ("with the people
and the animals that are on the earth"), an expression not found
in v. 5 LXX, helps add the Adamitic dimension to the portrait of
the Babylonian king.

There is however a significant point of difference between Baby-
lon and Judah. The particularly elevated position of Babylon will
last only a limited time. While this may imply a hope for Judah
and her future, until that time comes, submission to Babylon is

required both by Judah and her neighbours. The prediction of
the demise of Babylon is peculiar to the MT. In the LXX there is
no reference to an end of the Babylonian domination.

In vv. 12-15 and 16-22 two other aspects of the figure of Baby-
lon emerge. The first is in vv. 12-15. Here the theme of submis-
sion to Babylon, a significant idea in vv. 4-8 and 9-11, is contin-
ued. Associated with it is a further parody of the Deuteronomic
concept of life. For Judah life does not mean free possession and
full enjoyment of the land Yhwh promised them, but submission
to Babylon. The second is in vv. 16-22. Here, for the first time in
chap. 27, Babylon is represented as a place of banishment.

There is also reference to Judah's future. Banishment in Baby-
lon is not a permanent situation. The promise of return however
is expressed in muted terms. Jeremiah's prediction about the re-
turn of the temple vessels is far less extravagant than that of Ha-
naniah. There will be a return, but its nature and occasion are
not elaborated.

A very important part of the above analysis is the articulation
of the relationship between Babylon and Judah. At one level Baby-
lon is identified with Judah, a relationship brought about by the
presence in the portrait of Babylon, of images and language used
elsewhere in the OT to represent Judah and its relationship with
Yhwh. At another level Babylon is differentiated from Judah. The
elevated standing given it in Jeremiah 27 MT is of a limited dura-
tion. It will suffer demise while Judah will experience restoration.
There then a tension between the two figures, which is charac-
teristic of metaphor.[36] Babylon *is like* Judah, and Babylon *is not
like* Judah.

The further step of interpreting the significance of the rela-
tionship, especially the tension of identity and difference, will be
taken up in the final chapter of the study.[37]

---

[36] To use an expression of White, a metaphor is characterised by "a similar-
ity in difference" and "a difference in similarity" (Hayden White, *Tropics of Dis-
course: Essays in Cultural Criticism* [Baltimore/London, The Johns Hopkins Uni-
versity Press, 1978] 72). For a fuller explanation of the tensive understanding
of metaphor, see Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 45-52; *The Rule of Metaphor*, 193-
200. Also, see above 14-16.

[37] See below, 198-200.

3. Babylon in Jeremiah 29 MT

As in Jeremiah 27 MT, the representation of the figure of Babylon in Jeremiah 29 MT is startling. Common to both chapters is the metaphorical association of Babylon with Judah, and the consequent tension between identity and difference in that relationship. What is particular to Jeremiah 29 MT is its representation of Babylon as a place which resembles Judah. Although a place of exile, life in it is to be no different to that in Judah. The place of exile is home. Such a description of life in Babylon is not presented as a pragmatic strategy which the exiles should adopt because of Babylon's position of dominance, but rather has a profound theological underpinning which highlights how radical is the portrait of Babylon in Jeremiah 29 MT.

Jeremiah 29 MT consists of a letter written by the prophet to the exiles in Babylon and set sometime after the deportation of 597. Vv. 1-3 provide the introductory framework for the letter; vv. 4-28 contain the body of the letter; vv. 29-32 are a concluding oracle.[38]

Within vv. 4-28 further divisions can be made. V.4 consists of the messenger formula and an identification of the addressees. Vv. 5-9, which are concluded by the expression נאם־יהוה and which attack Jeremiah's prophetic opponents, counsel the exilic community about its life in Babylon. Vv. 10-14 are a promise of a return to the land. Vv. 15-23 take up the attack on Jeremiah's op-

---

[38] The limits of the letter are difficult to define because of the changes in the addressee. However v. 29 gives the clearest indication of the letter's end: ויקרא צפניה הכהן את־הספר הזה ("the priest Zephaniah read this letter"). הספר הזה refers back to the preceding verses, while v. 29 also provides the first shift of scene in the chapter. The repetition in v. 28 of the imperatives נטעו, שבו, בנו and אלכו links v. 28 back to v. 5 where these imperatives first appear. Although there are tensions within the letter, reflected especially in the sudden shifts of addressee, vv. 5-28 are presented as the contents of Jeremiah's letter. For these reasons, Holladay and Rudolph's judgments that vv. 1-23 should be separated from vv. 24-32 should be rejected (Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 137; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 181). Similarly Thompson's conclusion that vv. 1-32 belong together as part of one letter should be also be rejected (Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 544).

Vv. 5-28 may well consist of a number of different letters which have been brought together in the final redaction of the text. This possibility is suggested but not elaborated by Thompson, *ibid.*, 544. A division of the text with a symmetrical A-B-C-D-C'-B'-A' is proposed by Fishbane (*Biblical Interpretation*, 479 n. 55). However it is based only on vv. 1-29, and thereby does not account for vv. 30-32.

ponents. This is particularly clear in vv. 20-23, which are a de-
nunciation of the prophets Ahab and Zedekiah in the Babylonian
community, and vv. 24-28 which is an attack on Shemaiah who
seems also to be in Babylon. Within vv. 15-23 are vv. 16-19, which
promise the destruction and scattering of those left in Judah. The
theme of the rejection of the authentic prophetic word links these
verses to their present context.

3.1. *Babylon in vv. 1-3, 4-9*

V. 1 introduces the letter by identifying its sender as Jeremiah,
its origin as Jerusalem, and its addressees the leaders and the whole
exilic community in Babylon.

In v. 1 the exile is described as the work of Nebuchadnezzar:
אשר הגלה נבוכדנאצר מירושלם בבלה ("whom Nebuchadnezzar had
taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon" – v. 1). Then in v. 4
it is portrayed as that of Yhwh: לכל־הגולה אשר־הגליתי מירושלם בבלה
("whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon" – also
vv. 7, 14). The occurrence of גלה *hifil* with both Nebuchadnezzar
and Yhwh as its subjects brings about an identification of the two
figures similar to that found in 21:1-7 and 25:1-11 MT.[39] They are
partners in the banishment of Judah.

The idea of the partnership between Yhwh and Nebuchadnez-
zar is peculiar to the MT and is not represented in the LXX. The
expression לכל־הגולה אשר־הגליתי מירושלם בבלה (v. 4 MT) has no equiv-
alent in the LXX. There is then no literary strategy in the LXX
which brings together the figure of Yhwh and Nebuchadnezzar
as the subjects of a verb the equivalent in meaning to גלה *hifil*.
Where the MT then has the verb גלה *hifil* twice, once with Neb-
uchadnezzar as subject (v. 1) and once with Yhwh (v. 4), the LXX
has the equivalent verb ἀποικίζω ("to send away from home") only
in v. 4: οὕτως εἶπεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ισραηλ ἐπὶ ἀποικίαν, ἣν ἀπῴκισα
ἀπὸ Ιερουσαλημ ("thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to the
colony which I sent away from Jerusalem" – 36:4 LXX). In v. 3,

---

[39] For a treatment of 21:1-7, see above, 75-80; for 25:1-11, see above 103-110.
  The occurrence of גלה *hifil* with both Yhwh and Nebuchadnezzar as its sub-
jects is noted by Thiel, who interprets vv. 4b and 7 as correcting v. 1 which at-
tributes the exile to Nebuchadnezzar. For Thiel the purpose of the correction
is to emphasise that Yhwh was the cause of Judah's exile (*Jeremiah 26-45*, 11).

where the MT refers to Zedekiah's sending a delegation אֶל־
נְבוּכַדְנֶאצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל ("to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon"), the
LXX does not mention his name. It reads simply πρὸς βασιλέα
Βαβυλῶνος ("the king of Babylon" – 36:3 LXX).[40]

Vv. 4-7 MT contain Jeremiah's directions to the exiles about
how they are to live in Babylon. The instructions point to an ex-
traordinary understanding of Babylon:

v. 5 Build houses and live in them;	בְּנוּ בָתִּים
	וּשֵׁבוּ
plant gardens	וְנִטְעוּ גַנּוֹת
and eat what they produce.	וְאִכְלוּ אֶת־פִּרְיָן:
v. 6 Take wives and have sons	קְחוּ נָשִׁים
and daughters; take wives for	וְהוֹלִידוּ בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת
your sons, and give your	וּקְחוּ לִבְנֵיכֶם נָשִׁים
daughters in marriage, that	וְאֶת־בְּנוֹתֵיכֶם תְּנוּ
they may bear sons and	לַאֲנָשִׁים
daughters;	וְתֵלַדְנָה בָּנִים בָּנוֹת
multiply there,	וּרְבוּ־שָׁם
and do not decrease.	וְאַל־תִּמְעָטוּ:
v. 7 But seek the welfare of	וְדִרְשׁוּ אֶת־שְׁלוֹם
the city where I have sent you	הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר הִגְלֵיתִי
into exile,	אֶתְכֶם שָׁמָּה
and pray to the LORD on its	וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ עֲבָדָהּ
behalf,	אֶל־יְהוָה
for in its welfare you will	כִּי בִשְׁלוֹמָהּ
find your welfare.	יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שָׁלוֹם:
(29:5-7)	

If an initial reading reveals a positive view of life in Babylon, then
a closer reading of the text shows just how startling and radical
this positive view really is.

The letter gives four directives about life in Babylon: to build
houses, marry and reproduce, plant vineyards, and pray for Baby-
lon's welfare. These directives echo texts in the OT which speak
about life in the promised land.[41] What 29:5-7 directs is that the
exilic community should have the same positive attitude to life
in Babylon as they would to life in the land given them by Yhwh.

---

[40] For other instances of the absence of Nebuchadnezzar's name in the LXX,
see above, 104-107, 144-156.

The absence of Nebuchadnezzar's name is a commonly recognised feature
of the LXX. For a list of the passages in the book in which his name is absent
from the LXX, see Janzen, *Studies,* 139-141.

[41] For the OT background of the imagery in Jer 29:5-7, see Adele Berlin,
"Jeremiah 29:5-7: A Deuteronomic Allusion," *HAR* 8 (1984) 3-10.

This is surely a startling piece of advice. Life in Babylon is on a
par with life in the land of Judah![42]

The text to which Jer 29:5-7 principally alludes is Deuterono-
my 20, a description of the conduct of the holy war. Among the
various prescriptions in the chapter are the grounds for exemp-
tion from military service. According to Deut 20:5-8 the follow-
ing people are exempt: הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר בָּנָה בַיִת־חָדָשׁ וְלֹא חֲנָכוֹ ("anyone
who has built a new house but not dedicated it" – v. 5a); הָאִישׁ
אֲשֶׁר־נָטַע כֶּרֶם וְלֹא חִלְּלוֹ ("anyone who has planted a vineyard but
not yet enjoyed its fruits" – v. 6); הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־אֵרַשׂ אִשָּׁה וְלֹא לְקָחָהּ ("any-
one who has become engaged to a woman but not yet married
her" – v. 7). The reason for the exemption of people engaged in
these activities is that these activities signify the blessings associated
with the nation's life in the land given them by Yhwh. No one
therefore should be deprived of their enjoyment.[43]

Conversely, in Deut 28:30 their deprivation is a curse:[44]

You shall become engaged to a	אִשָּׁה תְאָרֵשׂ
woman, but another man shall	וְאִישׁ אַחֵר יִשְׁגָּלֶנָּה
lie with her. You shall build	
a house, but not live in it.	בַּיִת תִּבְנֶה
You shall plant a vineyard,	וְלֹא־תֵשֵׁב בּוֹ
but not enjoy its fruit	כֶּרֶם תִּטַּע
(Deut 28:30)	וְלֹא תְחַלְּלֶנּוּ׃

What is extraordinary about Jer 29:5-7 is that these activities, which
are directly associated with the blessings of life in the promised
land, are now to be carried out in the place of exile.

The startling character of 29:5-7 is even more apparent in the
light of Isa 65:21-23, and its vision of what will characterise the
community's life in the land after the return from exile:[45]

v. 21 They shall build houses   וּבָנוּ בָתִּים

---

[42] The startling nature of the advice is recognised in passing by Jonathan
Paige Sisson, "Jeremiah and the Jerusalem Conception of Peace," *JBL* 105 (1986)
440.

[43] For this, see Berlin, "Jeremiah 29:5-7," 4-5; Daniel L. Smith, *The Religion of
the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile* (Bloomington: Meyer-Stone,
1989) 135; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 187.

[44] As recognised by Berlin, "Jeremiah 29:5-7," 6; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 355; Tigay,
264-265.

[45] The similarities between Jer 29:5-7 and Isa 65:21-23 are recognised by Berlin,
"Jeremiah 29:5-7," 5-6.

and inhabit them; they shall	וישבו
plant vineyards and eat their	ונטעו כרמים
fruit.	ואכלו פרים:
v. 22 They shall not build	לא יבנו
and another inhabit;	ואחר ישב
they shall not plant and	לא יטעו
another eat...	ואחר יאכל...
v. 23 They shall not labor in	לא ייגעו
vain,	לריק
or bear children for	ולא ילדו
calamity...	לבהלה...
(Isa 65:21-23*)	

The activities of building houses and living in them, planting vine-
yards and enjoying their produce, and having children are seen
in Isa 65:21-23 as blessings which form part of the marvellous vi-
sion of post-restoration life found in Isaiah 40–66.[46] However in
Jer 29:5-7 these activities are to be part of life in exile. Life in
Babylon is to be no different to life in the land.

An examination of each of the expressions in 29:5-7 adds fur-
ther depth to the startling portrait of Babylon in these verses. The
first directive in vv. 5-7 is the building of houses. The expression
בנה בית occurs at an important place in the patriarchal narratives
which is relevant here. In Gen 33:17, on his way home from La-
ban and after meeting with Esau, Jacob goes to Sukkoth and set-
tles there on the east bank: ויעקב נסע סכתה ויבן לו בית ולמקנהו עשה
סכת ("but Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house,
and made booths for his cattle"). Jacob's action represents his
settling on the land promised by Yhwh, and marks the end of the
nomadic existence of the patriarchs.[47]

The second directive in vv. 5-7 is the command to multiply and

---

[46] The same imagery is used also in Ezek 28:25-26, an oracle which foretells
the restoration of those whom Yhwh has scattered. It is also found in Ps 107:36-
38 in the context of Yhwh's care for those in distress.

[47] While Jacob's action of building a house and a cattle stall puzzles Gunkel
and receives no comment from von Rad, it is seen as particularly important by
Westermann, according to whom Jacob's actions signify that "the wanderings of
the patriarchs came to an end in Canaan and their descendants settled down to
sedentary life" (*Genesis 12-36*, 527; for Gunkel's comments, see his *Genesis*, 368).
By way of contrast Jacob's connection to Shechem is described differently in
the highly controverted verse, Gen 33:18: ויבא יעקב שלם עיר שכם אשר בארץ כנען
בבאו מפדן ארם ויחן את־פני העיר ("Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which
is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram; and he camped before
the city").

not decrease. It also is reminiscent of the patriarchal traditions:
והרבה ארבה את־זרעך ככיכבי השמים וכחול אשר על־שפת הים ("and I
will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and
as the sand that is on the seashore" – Gen 22:17).[48] Now howev-
er, the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are to be realised
not in the land of Israel, but in exile in Babylon. The place of
exile is a place of life!

In this respect Babylon has a different aspect to that of Egypt,
a place in which the people also multiplied and became numer-
ous: ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו וירבו ויעצמו במאד ("But the Israelites were
fruitful and prolific; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong"
– Exod 1:7).[49] However their proliferation in Egypt, while seen
as a fulfilment of both the patriarchal promises and the command
of Gen 1:28, becomes the reason for their oppression (Exod 1:9).[50]
The view of Egypt as a place of oppression marks a major shift
from its representation in Gen 50:22 where it is described as Jo-
seph's dwelling place: וישב יוסף במצרים ("So Joseph dwelt in
Egypt").[51] Egypt changes from being a place of security and suc-
cess to one of oppression, whereas the shift in the representa-
tion of Babylon in Jer 29:4-7 is in the opposite direction. The lat-
ter, initially represented as the place of exile (vv. 1, 4), becomes
their homeland and a place of life.

The third directive in vv. 5-7, perhaps the most startling fea-
ture of all, is to pray for the welfare of Babylon: ודרשו את־שלום
העיר...והתפלל בעדה אל־יהיה כי בשלומה יהיה לכם שלום ("But seek the
welfare of the city...and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its
welfare you will find your welfare"). The verse has cultic overtones,
as the use of the verbs דרש ("seek") and פלל hithpa'el ("pray") in-
dicate. V. 7 points back to the introduction to the letter which
begins with a reference to the full cultic name of Yhwh: כה אמר

---

[48] The promise of many descendants is also found in Gen 16:10; 17:2, 20;
22:17 (to Abraham); 26:4, 24 (to Isaac) and 28:3; 35:11 (to Jacob).

[49] See also Deut 26:5 for a similar reference. The link between Deut 26:5
and Exodus 1 is noted by Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 334-335.

[50] Childs, *Exodus*, 2-3. On this same theme, but written from a quite differ-
ent perspective, see Renita J. Weems, "The Hebrew Women are not Like the
Egyptian Women: The Ideology of Race, Gender and Sexual Reproduction in
Exodus 1," *Semeia*, 59 (1992) 25-29.

[51] Reading with the RSV in Gen 50:22, rather than the less literal translation
of the NRSV – "and Joseph remained in Egypt".

יהוה צבאות אלהי ישראל ("Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel").[52]

The directive to pray for the שלום of the city alludes to ירושלם ("Jerusalem"), *the* city of שלום, as Ps 122:6 would suggest: שאלו שלום ירושלם ("pray for the peace of Jerusalem"). Then, according to v. 7, prayer for the שלום of Jerusalem (Ps 122:6) is then said to consist of two things: שלום בחילך ("peace within your walls" and שלום בארמניתיך ("security within your towers").[53] The play on the word שלום gives Jer 29:7 an almost blasphemous character. Prayer for the welfare of Jerusalem is turned into praying for the welfare of the city which is Jerusalem's conqueror. The use of language from the temple cult adds to the blasphemy. The place now in which Yhwh is to be found is not in the Jerusalem temple, but in the city of the conqueror, an alien and unclean place.[54]

The shocking character of v. 7 becomes even more apparent in the light of Yhwh's instruction to the Jeremiah in 7:16:

| As for you, do not pray for this people, do not raise a cry or prayer on their behalf, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you (Jer 7:16) | ואתה אל־התפלל בעד־העם הזה ואל־תשא בעדם רנה ותפלה ואל־הפגע־בי כי־אינני שמע אתך: |

The prohibition to pray for the people is also repeated in 11:14 and 14:11. While the prophet is forbidden to intercede for the people while they were still in the land of Judah before the disaster of 597, the exiles in the days after the disaster are told to intercede for the welfare of the city whose king captured them and their land. Such a directive surely turns upside down the orthodox and the expected.

A comparison with the LXX here highlights the MT's distinc-

---

[52] As noted by Weiser, *Jeremia*, 261.

[53] So, Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, 82. Weiser describes the connection between שלום and the city ירושלם as an instance of "*nomen est omen*: the city of God and the house of God within her as the place where peace reigns and as the springs of salvation" (Artur Weiser, *The Psalms* [OTL; London: SCM, 1962] 751). On this points see also Norman Porteous, "Jerusalem-Zion: The Growth of a Symbol," *Living the Mystery* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967) 93-99; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 96.

[54] Another significance of the use of cultic language in 29:4-7, as Weiser notes, is that it indicates a belief that Yhwh's power extends to foreign lands, and is not in any way subordinate to the Babylonian deities (*Jeremia*, 261).

tive contrast between the figures of Jerusalem and Babylon in 29:7
MT. Where the MT has ודרשו את־שלום העיר (v. 7 MT), the LXX
reads καὶ ζητήσατε εἰς εἰρήνην τῆς γῆς ("seek the peace of the land"
– 36:7 LXX). The significance of this difference becomes clearer
when the absence from the LXX of 29:16-20 MT is taken into
account. Vv. 16-20 address the fate of those left behind in Jerusa-
lem after 597 and threatens them with death and destruction:
הנני משלח בם את־החרב את־הרעב ואת־הדבר ("I am going to let loose
on them sword, famine and pestilence"). Where the MT focuses
on the *city* of Babylon as a place of life for the community and
the *city* of Jerusalem as a place of death for its inhabitants, the
LXX lacks this stark and offensive contrast. In 34:7 LXX the ex-
iles are commanded to seek the welfare of the *land* of Babylon,
and in the whole of chap. 34 LXX there is no reference at all to
the fate of Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

As with 27:4-8 the effect of the language used in 29:4-9 is to
bring about a metaphorical association between the figures of
Babylon and Judah. The same literary technique is evident in both
passages. Imagery and language used in Judah's sacred traditions
to express its own identity and unique relationship with Yhwh are
associated with the figure of the pagan conqueror. Where in
27:4-8 Babylon was represented by the metonymic figure of its
king, in 29:4-9 it is represented as a place whose topography is
the same as that of Judah. There is a breaking down of the rela-
tionship of opposition between a Judah, which was the exile's
homeland and a place particularly associated with Yhwh's pres-
ence, and a Babylon which is Judah's enemy and the place of ban-
ishment for its people. The relationship between Babylon and
Judah is one of identity. Babylon is Judah!

It has been argued that Jeremiah's directives may have contained
an element of political pragmatism, especially in the light of the
command in v. 7 to pray for Babylon's שלום ("welfare"). The di-
rectives in vv. 4-7 are about submission to a superior power, and
they reflect a common sense pragmatism on the part of Jere-
miah. A prosperous and secure Babylon would offer the exiles a
better life there than would a Babylon which was torn by strife or
under threat.[55]

---

[55] This is the opinion of Berlin, who argues that the expression שלום העיר
("the welfare of the city") points to the directive in Deut 20:10 that the city
under attack should be offered terms for peace so that war can be avoided. In

This argument however does not properly account for the language of vv. 4-7, which is not that of submission. It is clearly different from that in chaps. 27-28, in which the yoke and the root עבד ("to serve") are central to the chapter's emphasis on submission to Babylon. Chap. 28 begins and ends with imagery associated with the yoke. The oracle of Hananiah in vv. 2-4, which predicts a quick end to Babylonian domination, is framed by references to the yoke of the king of Babylon: שברתי את־על מלך בבל ("I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon" – v. 2).[56]

Imagery associated with the yoke is further developed in 28:12-14. Hananiah's prediction about the end of Babylonian domination is countered by a prediction of Jeremiah: מוטת עץ שברת ועשׂתי תחתיהן מוטת ברזל ("You have broken wooden bars only to forge iron bars in place of them" – v. 12). The word מוטה refers to part of the apparatus which fastened the yoke (על) to the neck of the animal.[57] In v. 14 a more secure yoke is promised: על ברזל נתתי על־צואר כל־הגוים האלה לעבד את־נבכדנאצר מלך־בבל ("I have put an iron yoke on the neck of all these nations so that they may serve King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon"). With its use of עבד ("to serve") and reference to Nebuchadnezzar's power over the created order, 28:14 links back to 27:4-8 so that chaps. 27-28 are enclosed by the language of submission.

The most significant feature of vv. 4-7 for the present study is that metaphorical identity established between the figures of Babylon and Judah. Babylon is the place in which the Deuteronomic blessings are to be realised, and the place in which Yhwh is accessible to the community in its worship.

---

directing that the exiles seek שלום העיר, Jeremiah "is also subtly counselling against rebellion", a course of action based on his recognition of Babylon's overwhelming power ("Jeremiah 29:5-7," 4). The counsel offered in Jer 29:5-7 is then based on the exiles' recognition of the Babylonians' overwhelming power (*ibid.*). A similar argument is given by Cornill (*Jeremia*, 316) and Smith (*The Religion of the Landless*, 135). The practical character of the advice is also seen by Carroll, who describes the directives as "civil religion at its very best" and "a blueprint for millennia to come" (*Jeremiah*, 556). The pragmatic character of vv. 5-7 is also argued by McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:742-743.

[56] The expression is also found in vv. 4 and 11, which have אשבר ("I will break") for שברתי ("I have broken").

[57] For the discussion of the meaning of מוטה see Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 120; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:713; C. U. Wolf, "Yoke," *IDB* 4:924-5.

3.2. *Babylon in vv. 10-14*

Where in vv. 4-7 a relationship of identity between Babylon and
Judah is represented, what is represented in vv. 10-14 is a rela-
tionship of difference. Like 25:12-14 MT and 27:7 MT, these verses
point to an end of Babylonian domination. However whereas these
two passages refer to a period of Babylonian subjugation which
follows the seventy years of Babylonian dominance, 29:10-14 de-
scribes a different outcome. The end of Babylonian dominance
is the occasion for a return to the land. In these verses Babylon
is a metaphor for the place from which exiles will be returned by
Yhwh to the land.

Vv. 10-14 are framed by references to a return to the land:[58]

v. 10 For thus says the LORD:	כי־כה אמר יהוה
Only when Babylon's seventy	כי לפי מלאת לבבל
years are completed will I	שבעים שנה
visit you, and I will fulfill	אפקד אתכם והקמתי עליכם
to you my promise and bring	את־דברי הטוב להשיב
you back to this place...	אתכם אל־המקום הזה...
v. 14 I will let you find me,	ונמצאתי לכם
says the LORD,and I will	נאם־יהוה
restore your fortunes and	ושבתי את־שביתכם
gather you from all the	וקבצתי אתכם
nations and all the places	מכל־הגוים ומכל־המקומות
where I have driven you, says	אשר הדחתי אתכם שם
the LORD, and I will bring you	נאם־יהוה
back to the place from which I	והשבתי אתכם
sent you into exile.	אל־המקום אשר־הגליתי
(Jer 29:10, 14)	אתכם משם:

What is of particular interest for the present study are the refer-
ences in v. 10 to the end of Babylonian domination, and the prom-
ise of restoration to the land in v. 14.

Vv. 10-14 are in the form of a proclamation of salvation.[59] The
unit begins with a reference in v. 10 to the seventy years of Baby-
lon's domination in v. 10, an expression which has a metaphori-

---

[58] So, Elmer A. Martens, *Motivations for the Promise of Israel's Restoration to the
Land in Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1972)
61-62.

[59] As Holladay notes, unlike the salvation oracle they have "no reassurance
for the present (such as 'fear not') but rather a statement oriented towards the
future" (*Jeremiah 2*, 138). On 29:10-14 as an oracle of salvation, see also Mar-
tens, *Motivations*, 61-62.

cal significance.[60] The language is similar to that of 25:12 MT. Both verses have the infinitive construct of מלא ("to be full", "to be complete"), the phrase שׁבעים שׁנה ("seventy years") and the verb פקד ("to visit"). Where the meaning of פקד in 25:12 MT is negative, it has a positive meaning in 29:10.[61] According to v. 10, the announcement of the return represents the fulfilment of דברי הטוב ("my promise"). This refers back to the promise in 24:4-7 to the exiles in Babylon.[62] The result of Yhwh's visitation is that at some time in the future those banished from the land would return.

In v. 14 the promise of the return is elaborated. V. 14 begins with the expression ונמצאתי לכם נאם־יהוה ("and I will let you find me, says the LORD" – v. 14aα). From the viewpoint of its content, v. 14aα belongs with v. 13, which is also about the accessibility of Yhwh. V. 14aβ begins with the expression ושׁבתי את־שׁביתכם ("and I will restore your fortunes"), and introduce the idea of a return.[63]

The rest of v. 14 consists of two balanced clauses with נאם־יהוה ("says the LORD") as its mid-point:[64]

And I will gather you from all	וקבצתי אתכם
the nations and all the places	מכל־הגיום ומכל־המקומות
where I have driven you, says	אשׁר הדחתי אתכם שׁם
the LORD, and I will bring you	נאם־יהוה
back to the place from which I	והשׁבתי אתכם
sent you into exile.	אל־המקום
(Jer 29:14aβb)	אשׁר־הגליתי אתכם משׁם:

V. 14aβb brings together in a relationship of association two groups,

---

[60] For the discussion of the meaning of שׁביעים שׁנה ("seventy years"), see above, 135-137.

[61] As pointed out by Rietzschel, *Urrolle*, 117; Wanke, *Untersuchungen*, 45.

[62] On the links between 29:10-14 and chap. 24, see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 562-563; John Hill, "The 'Return' Motif in Jeremiah 24," (Dissertation [Theol.M.] Melbourne College of Divinity, 1983) 24-26; Thiel, *Jeremia 26-45*, 14-15; Wanke, *Untersuchungen*, 45-46.

[63] So, Martens, *Motivations*, 62. שׁוב שׁבות ("to restore the fortunes") is a formulaic expression, which is common in the promises of restoration in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and which implies a return to the land. Its significance in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel has been examined in detail by Martens, *Motivations*, 172-196. For the etymological roots of the expression, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic Suzerainty Treaty from Sefirê in the Museum of Beirut," *CBQ* 20 (1958) 444-476, esp. 464.

[64] Rendtorff calls v. 14aβb an instance of "a non-metrical parallelism" ("Zum Gebrauch," 34).

those to be gathered from the nations, and those who are to be brought back from exile. A promise to exiles in Babylon becomes a promise to those scattered in diaspora. In v. 14 the two become one entity.[65]

The fusion of the two groups with each other is brought by the parallel structure of v. 14aβb, in which the verbs נדח *hifil* and גלה *hifil* describe the two groups' situation. Within the book of Jeremiah the verb נדח *hifil* refers to the banishment of the people among unnamed nations. It is not used to refer specifically to exile to Babylon.[66] However in v. 14aαb those who are to return are also referred to by the verb גלה *hifil*, which in Jeremiah 29 MT is used specifically of the exile to Babylon. Apart from 23:12, in which the place of exile is not specified, the usual meaning of גלה *hifil* is that of exile to Babylon.[67] In 29:1 the recipients of Jeremiah's letter are described as אשר הגלה נבוכדנאצר מירושלם בבלה ("whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon"). In v. 4 the prophetic message is addressed לכל־הגולה אשר־הגליתי מירושלם בבלה ("to all the exiles whom I sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon").

However within v. 14aβb, the group whose situation is represented by אשר הדחתי אתכם ("whom I have driven away") are then referred to by the verb גלה *hifil*: הגליתי אתכם ("I sent you into exile"). The situation to which the verb גלה *hifil* refers is expanded to include that of banishment among the nations. What also unites both groups is that they are addressed as אתכם ("you"), a form of address which runs right through vv. 10-14. אתכם embraces both those in diaspora and those in exile in Babylon.

The identification of exile in Babylon with banishment among

---

[65] That 29:14 contains a promise of return to those in diaspora is noted by noted by Carroll (*Jeremiah*, 558) and J. Lust ("'Gathering and Return' in Jeremiah and Ezekiel," *Le Livre de Jeareamie*, 129-130). In both cases they are addressing the text's compositional history.

[66] The following list of phrases illustrates the uses of נדח *hifil* in the book: בכל־המקמות הנשארים אשר הדחתים שם ("in all the remaining places where I have driven them" – 8:3; 24:9); מארץ צפון ומכל הארצות אשר הדיחם שמה ("out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them" – 16:15); מכל הארצות אשרהדחתי אתם שם ("out of all the lands where I have driven them" – 23:3, 8; 32:37); בכל־הגוים אשר הדחתים ("among all the nations where I have driven them" – 29:18). The verb is used without any adverbial modifier in 27:10: והדתי אתכם ואבדתם ("I will drive you out, and you will perish" – also 27:15).

[67] References to exile in Babylon are found in 20:4; 27:20; 39:9; 43:3; 52:15, 28, 30. In 23:12 the place of exile is not named: כי במקום אשר הגלו אתו שם ימות ("but in the place where they carried him captive, he shall die").

the nations is an understanding peculiar to the MT. The linking of those in exile with those in diaspora is not found in the LXX, as is clear from 36:14 LXX, the equivalent of 29:14 MT. The references in the latter to both exile and diaspora are not found in the former, which simply has: καὶ ἐπιφανοῦμαι ὑμῖν ("and I will show myself to you"). Vv. 10-14 LXX portray only a return of those in Babylon to Judah: καὶ ἐπιστήσω τοὺς λόγους μου ἐφ' ὑμᾶς τοῦ τὸν λαὸν ὑμῶν ἀποστρέψαι εἰς τὸν τόπον τοῦτον ("I will stand by my words to you to bring back your people to this place" – 36:10 LXX).

The identification of those in diaspora and those in exile in Babylon exists at the level of metaphor. It is a relationship brought about by the literary dynamics of v. 14 MT. Babylon then becomes a metaphor for displacement from one's homeland, and at the same time the place from which people will return. While historical research can identify an exile of Judeans to Babylon in the wake of Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem in 597, and differentiate it from the existence of various Jewish communities outside Judah particularly in the post-exilic period, such a separation does not exist in the world of the text in v. 14.

The identification of Babylon with the situation of banishment happens in the earlier chapters of the book. In chaps. 2-20 the image of banishment to unnamed lands was used as a metaphor for Yhwh's judgment on Judah. As one of a number of individual metaphors it was part of a metaphorical network within which Babylon was the organising metaphor. Here in 29:14 there is a similar identification of the figure of Babylon with the image of banishment among unnamed nations. There is however a significant difference between the Babylon of chaps. 2-20 and that of 29:14. Whereas in the former the place of banishment is a place of death, in the latter it is a place of life from which the banished will return to their own land.

The metaphorical identification of Babylon as the place from which all the banished will return results in a different relationship between the figures of Judah and Babylon in vv. 10-14 from that represented in vv. 4-9. While the relationship in vv. 4-9 was one of identity, in vv. 10-14 it is one of difference. Now Judah is identified as home, as the promises in vv. 10 and 14 indicate, and Babylon the place of banishment.

3.3. *Conclusions: Babylon in Jeremiah 29 MT*

The above analysis has highlighted two aspects of the figure of Babylon in Jeremiah 29 MT. The first, in vv. 4-9 is the metaphorical identification of Babylon with Judah. The letter begins by identifying Babylon as a place of exile (vv. 1, 4). Then in vv. 4-9, Babylon is represented as another Judah. It is a place in which the blessings associated with life in the promised land can be experienced by the exiles, and a place in which Yhwh is accessible by prayer. The place of exile becomes home, in the deepest sense of that word. The advice in vv. 4-9 about life in Babylon is more than an expression of a pragmatic view of reality, in which conquered exiles realise that they have to make the best of a bad situation. It is the use of images and language from Judah's sacred traditions which gives to vv. 4-9 their startling and radical character. Babylon is described as another Judah. Such a portrait is founded not on an attitude of political pragmatism, but on far more profound theological grounds.

The second aspect of the description of Babylon is in vv. 10-14, in which Babylon is metaphorically represented as that place from which not only exiles (i.e., those designated by the verb גלה) but all those dispersed among the nations (those designated by the verb נדה) will return. Where Babylon was represented in vv. 4-8 as a figure *similar to* Judah, it is represented in vv. 10-14 as a figure *different from* Judah. It represents the place of banishment from which people will return.

4. *Summary*

Within Jeremiah 27 and 29 MT Babylon is metaphorically represented as a figure like Judah. In Jeremiah 27 MT the association between the two is brought about by the use of images and language from Judah's sacred traditions to portray the Babylonian king. In Jeremiah 29 MT it is brought about in the same way. Where in Jeremiah 27 MT Babylon was represented by the metonymic figure of its king, in Jeremiah 29 MT it is represented explicitly as a city and implicitly as a land. In Jeremiah 27 MT Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed as a figure with the same authority over creation as that given the first inhabitant of the garden in Genesis 2. He also has the same standing and relationship to Yhwh

as did the greatest kings of Judah. In Jeremiah 29 MT the city of Babylon becomes another Jerusalem, a place in which Yhwh is accessible to the exiles and the welfare of which they must seek in prayer. By contrast the Jerusalem from which they were taken is to be destroyed. As a land Babylon is now the place in which the Deuteronomic blessings of life in the land will be experienced by the exiles.

A further common aspect to Jeremiah 27 and 29 MT is the prediction of an end to Babylonian domination, a theme which is also found in Jeremiah 25 MT. In this way Babylon, although a figure of great power and extraordinary standing, is always portrayed as subordinate to Yhwh. Within Jeremiah 27 and 29 MT a central theme is the power of Yhwh over not only Judah but also the other nations including Babylon.

While both Jeremiah 27 MT and Jeremiah 29 MT contain a promise of a return to the land, in Jeremiah 29 MT it is more clearly associated with the end of Babylonian domination. In the promise of a return in 29:10-14 the figure of Babylon is portrayed as a metaphor for banishment. Exile to Babylon and dispersal in the diaspora become identified. A return from Babylon is part of the same process as the gathering of those in the diaspora.

The prediction of an end to Babylonian domination also means an end to Babylon's elevated standing. In this way it appears as a figure different from that of Judah. In Jeremiah 27–29 MT the relationship between the figures is characterised by the tension between identity and difference which is a central feature of metaphor. It is this metaphorical relationship between the two figures that is an extremely important but unrecognised feature of the book. Its significance will be explored in the final chapter of the study.[68]

---

[68] See below, 197-202.

BABYLON IN JEREMIAH 50–51 MT

If there is one place in the book of Jeremiah that the reader would expect to find an unrelentingly negative representation of the figure of Babylon, it would surely be in chaps. 50–51 MT, the oracles of judgment against Babylon. However, although it is depicted in Jeremiah 50–51 MT primarily as the enemy of both Judah and Yhwh, there is an ambiguity in Babylon's representation in these chapters. Predominantly represented as the enemy of both Yhwh and Judah, Babylon is also portrayed in a less hostile way. This more benign view undermines the perception of Babylon as an essentially alien figure opposed to both Yhwh and Judah.

Intertwined with the imagery and language which signify a relationship of opposition between Babylon and Judah are literary structures, imagery and language which point to a relationship of identity between the two. Both are portrayed as sinful and guilty. The punishment of both originates from the same God, takes the same form, and is expressed in the same imagery and language. The representation of Babylon and its relationship with Judah in chaps. 50–51 MT reflects the same tension between identity and difference that was found in chaps. 27 MT and 29 MT. Where the relationship of identity was prominent in the latter chapters, it is the relationship of difference that is primary in chaps. 50–51 MT. However, even in this the most anti-Babylon part of the whole book, its representation is not completely negative.

The following analysis of Babylon in Jeremiah 50–51 MT begins with a consideration of the context of these chapters. Then follows an examination of Babylon's representation in Jeremiah 50–51 MT as a figure opposed to both Yhwh and Judah. The next section examines how this representation is undermined by material in the text which points to a relationship of identity. This is followed by a comparison with the oracles against Babylon in the book of Isaiah, the purpose of which is to highlight the distinctive representation of Babylon in Jeremiah 50–51 MT.

1. *The Context of the Oracles Against Babylon*

The oracles against Babylon in chaps. 50–51 MT are a part of the larger collection of oracles against the nations in chaps. 46–51 MT. In the MT these latter chapters come after the narratives which describe the siege and fall of Jerusalem in 587 (chaps. 37–39 MT), the aftermath (chaps. 40–44 MT), and the commissioning of Baruch as the carrier of the prophetic message (chap. 45 MT). By the end of chap. 44 the judgment against Judah predicted in chaps. 1–25 MT has now been realised.

However in chap. 45 there are indications that Yhwh's judgment has still to run its course. The chapter begins with a chronological marker, בשנה הרבעית ליהויקים ("in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim" – v. 1) which is also a metaphor for judgment, and the chapter ends with a reference to a further judgment beyond that of Judah: כי הנני מביא רעה על־כל־בשר ("for I am going to bring disaster on all flesh" – v. 5). What is foreshadowed in v. 5 unfolds in the oracles against the nations (chaps. 45–51 MT).

The oracles against Babylon in chaps. 50–51 MT are the climax of the oracles against the nations in the MT of the book, as their length, framing and position in the book indicate. They contain 110 verses, in comparison to 28 verses in the oracles against Egypt and 47 verses in those against Moab. Their framing differs from the other oracles in chaps. 46–51 MT, both in their beginning and conclusion. In 50:1 they are introduced by הדבר אשר דבר יהוה...ביד ירמיהו הנביא ("the word that the LORD spoke...by the prophet Jeremiah"), an expression which is not found in the other oracles against the nations, and occurs only once in the book (37:2).[1] Their conclusion, 51:59-64, is different both in size and content from what is found at the end of the oracles against the other nations. According to 51:59-64. the oracles against Babylon were in written form, and were to be delivered by the symbolic action of casting into the Euphrates the scroll on which they had been written.

The function of the oracles against Babylon within the oracles against the nations in the MT can best be appreciated through a

---

[1] As noted by Jones, *Jeremiah*, 524. The more common formula is הדבר אשר היה אל־ירמיהו ("the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD") and is found in 11:1; 14:1; 18:1; 30:1 (Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 267).

comparison with the order of the oracles against the nations in the LXX:[2]

MT	LXX
Egypt (46:2-28)	Elam (25:14-20)
Philistia (47:1-7)	Egypt (26:1-28)
Moab (chap. 48)	Babylon (chaps. 27-28)
Ammon (49:1-6)	Philistia (chap. 29)
Edom (49:7-22)	Edom (30:1-16)
Damascus (49:23-27)	Ammon (30:17-21)
Kedar (49:28-33)	Kedar (23:23-28)
Elam (49:34-39)	Damascus (23:29-33)
Babylon (chaps. 50-51)	Moab (chap. 31)

In the MT the position of the oracles against Babylon within chaps. 50-51 MT gives them a particular emphasis. The order of the nations in Jeremiah 50-51 MT closely parallels that in 25:15-26, which also begins with Egypt and ends with Babylon. In both cases the lists begin and end with the two nations who play critical roles in Judah's history and sacred traditions. The judgment begins with Egypt, one archetypal enemy of Yhwh and Judah, and concludes with Babylon as the other. In 25:26 the climax of Yhwh's judgment is the submission of Babylon. The order of chaps. 50-51 MT has a similar emphasis.

By way of contrast, in the LXX the oracles against Babylon are third, a position to which no importance can be attached.[3] Furthermore, where the MT's order of the oracles against the nations is close to that of the list of nations in 25:15-26, the situation is different with the LXX. The list of the nations who are to drink the cup of judgment in 25:15-26 MT begins with Egypt and ends with Babylon. The LXX's list has Egypt at its beginning but concludes with the generic expression καὶ πάσας τὰς βασιλείας τὰς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ("and all the kingdoms that are upon the earth" – 32:26 LXX). Babylon is not mentioned at all.

The absence in 25:14-32:38 LXX of a particular focus on Babylon is also consistent with the representation of Babylon in

---

[2] The table is based on that in Rietzschel, *Urrolle*, 82. A similar table is also given by Watts, "Text and Redaction," 439.

[3] As noted by Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 759. Rietzschel proposes that the LXX's order reflects the political situation of the Syro-Palestinian world in the second century BCE (*Urrolle*, 82-84; also noted by Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 313). Janzen cites the lack of order in the LXX's list as an instance of *lectio difficilior*, and on this basis argues that the order of the oracles in the LXX should be preferred to that of the MT (*Studies*, 115-116).

25:1-13 LXX. For example, in 25:9 the LXX refers to Yhwh's agent of judgment simply as τὴν πατριὰν ἀπὸ βορρᾶ ("the nation from the north"), whereas in the MT the invader is identified as the Babylonians. In 25:11 the LXX describes Judah's fate in generic terms: καὶ δουλεύσουσιν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτη ("and they will be slaves among the nations for seventy years"). However, in the MT the conqueror (not only of Judah, but also its neighbours) is specified as Babylon: ועבדו הגוים האלה את־מלך בבל שבעים שנה ("and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years"). Furthermore, when in v. 12 the LXX refers to the end of Judah's subjection, there is still no mention of Babylon: καὶ ἐν τῷ πληρωθῆναι τὰ ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτη ἐκδικήσω τὸ ἔθνος ἐκεῖνο ("and when seventy years are fulfilled for that nation"). At the corresponding place the MT has אפקד על־מלך־בבל ("I will punish the king of Babylon" – v. 12 MT).[4]

The differences between the setting of the oracles against the nations in the MT and in the LXX also highlight the MT's particular focus on the figure of Babylon. In the LXX the oracles against the nations begin at 25:14 LXX and extend through to 32:38 LXX. The following chapters, 33–43 LXX (which correspond to 26–36 MT) contain promises of a future for Judah (chaps. 36–40 LXX; chaps. 29–33 MT), and the narrative of the fall of Jerusalem (chaps. 44–50 LXX; chaps. 37–44 MT). The oracles against Babylon then are buried away in a position of no importance in chaps. 33–43 LXX, between the oracle against Egypt and that against Philistia.[5]

So, at three significant places in the LXX – the oracles against

---

[4] For further on this point, see above, 114-119.

[5] The LXX has an arrangement which is regarded by some scholars as closer to the book of Ezekiel and parts of Isaiah, progressing from oracles against Judah to oracles against the nations, and finally to oracles of salvation for Judah. However in Jeremiah LXX this pattern is somewhat undermined by Jeremiah 44-51 LXX (chaps. 37-44 MT), which follow the oracles of salvation and which describe the conquest of Jerusalem and its aftermath. For this view see Christopher R. Seitz, "The Prophet Moses and the Canonical Shape of Jeremiah," 24.

For the view that the arrangement of Jeremiah LXX follows that of the books of Isaiah and Ezekiel, see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 54, 757-758; Georg Fohrer, "Vollmacht über Völker und Königreiche (Jer 46-51)," *Studien zur alttestamentlichen Texten und Themen (1966-1972)* (BZAW 155; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1981) 45. According to Duhm, the book of Ezekiel is the earliest of these books, and both Isaiah and Jeremiah LXX follow its pattern (Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaia* [HKAT 3.1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892] 9).

the nations themselves (25:14-32:13), their prelude (25:1-13) and sequel (32:14-27) – the figure of Babylon is given no place of emphasis or importance. In the corresponding MT texts, Babylon is the key figure. Their length, framing and position at the end of the collection indicate that the oracles against Babylon are the climax of chaps. 46-51.

2. *Babylon—The Defeated Alien Other*

The dominant theme of chaps. 50-51 MT is the imminent defeat of Babylon, which is represented as the enemy both of Yhwh and Judah, and which must now be punished for its pride and arrogance.

Thematically the oracles represent a reversal of what has preceded in chaps. 2-25 MT which consist predominantly of oracles against Judah, and in which Babylon is represented as the agent of Yhwh's judgment. The victory of Babylon and the fall of Jerusalem in 587, events narrated in chaps. 37-44 MT, are the realisation of this judgment.

The thematic reversal is accompanied by a major shift in the imagery used to portray Babylon. In chaps. 50-51 MT the dominant images of Babylon are spatial. Babylon is a land and a city. While spatial imagery is found earlier in the book to represent Babylon, such imagery was not used in any extensive way with the exception of 29:4-9. Now in chaps. 50-51 MT, Babylon is a land which has inhabitants, animals and crops. It is a city with deities, inhabitants and walls. Whereas in chaps. 21, 25, 27-29 MT the figure of the Babylonian king was a particularly significant and rich image for Babylon, in chaps. 50-51 MT Babylon is represented by the figure of its king only in 50:17, 18, 43; 51:31, 34. It is more commonly represented in these chapters by the feminine images of a land and a city.

It is this dominant set of images for Babylon – i.e, land and city – which will be treated first. An analysis of the various other images for Babylon will then follow. The central text for consideration here is 50:1-3, which consists of a superscription (v. 1) and vv. 2-3, which with 51:54-58 frame the oracles.[6]

---

[6] 50:1 and 51:59-64 mark the outer parameters of the oracles. The superscription (50:1) parallels the conclusion (51:59-64) in that both passages refer

The superscription flags the first signal of the radical thematic reversal in the oracles and of the major shift in the imagery used to describe Babylon: הדבר אשר דבר יהוה אל־בבל אל־ארץ כשדים ("The word the LORD spoke concerning Babylon, concerning the land of the Chaldeans" – 50:1). Babylon is referred to as a land, ארץ כשדים ("the land of the Chaldeans"), a relatively uncommon designation in the book. Whereas the word בבל occurs more than one hundred and sixty times, the expression ארץ כשדים is found only eight times: 24:5; 25:12; 50:1, 8, 25, 45; 51:4, 54. Apart from 24:5, all of these verses belong to a context of punishment for Babylon. Its use here in 50:1 foreshadows Babylon's fate of defeat and devastation.

The shift in imagery is also found in the conclusion of chaps. 50–51, according to which Babylon is destined to be a land bereft of any inhabitants: לבלתי היות־בו יושב למאדם ועד־בהמה כי שממות עולם תהיה ("so that neither human beings nor animals shall live in it, and it shall be desolate forever" – 51:62). Chaps. 50–51 MT are thus framed by texts in which Babylon is represented as a land.

The theme of Babylon as a desolate land is found in 50:2-3, which introduce the oracles:[7]

---

to the reception and transmission of the oracles. 50:1 identifies their origin and the receiver: הדבר אשר דבר יהוה...ביד ירמיהו הנביא ("The word that the LORD spoke...by the prophet Jeremiah"). 51:59-64 refers to a further process of reception and transmission in which: a) Jeremiah is the transmitter and Seraiah the receiver – הדבר אשר צוה ירמיהו הנביא את־שריה ("The word that the prophet Jeremiah command Seraiah" – v. 59); b) Jeremiah is the origin and the scroll the receiver – ויכתב ירמיהו את כל־הרעה...אל־ספר אחד ("Jeremiah wrote in a scroll all the disasters..." – v. 60); c) Seraiah with the scroll is the transmitter and Babylon the receiver – ויאמר ירמיהו אל־שריה כבאך בבל וראית וקראת את כל־הדברים האלה ("And Jeremiah said to Seraiah: 'When you come to Babylon, see that you read all these words'" – v. 61).

On 50:2-3 and 51:54-58 as framing units, see Kenneth T. Aitken, "The Oracles against Babylon in Jeremiah 50-51: Structures and Perspectives," *Tyndale Bulletin* 35 (1984) 30; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 818.

[7] For vv. 2-3 as an introduction to the oracles, see Aitken, "Oracles," 30-31; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 818-819. Reimer calls these verses "the poetic superscription for the oracles to follow" (*Oracles*, 27).

Vv. 2-3 also contain words, phrases and ideas which recur in the body of the oracles. נגד *hifil* ("to declare" – v. 2) occurs again in 50:28 and 51:31. שמע *hifil* ("to proclaim" – v. 2) occurs again in 50:29 and 51:27 where it means to summon the enemy to come against Babylon. The military expression שאו נס ("set up a banner" – v. 2) is in 51:12, 27. In 50:2 בבל ("Babylon") is portrayed as a feminine figure, and this is sustained throughout chaps. 50-51. It is represented as a land in 50:8, 16, 25-29, 33-34, 35-38, 44-46; 51:33; as a city in 50:29; 51:1-5, 12; as a mother in 50:12.

v. 2 Declare among the	הגידו בגוים
nations and proclaim,	והשמיעו
set up a banner and proclaim,	ושאו־נס השמיעו
do not conceal it, say:	אל־תכחדו
Babylon is taken,	אמרו נלכדה בבל
Bel is put to shame, Merodach	הביש בל
is dismayed.	חת מרדך
Her images are put to shame,	הבישו עצביה
her idols are dismayed.	חתו גלוליה
v. 3 For out of the north	כי עלה עליה
a nation has come up against	גוי מצפון
her;	
it shall make her land a	הוא־ישית
desolation,	את־ארצה לשמה
and no one shall live in it;	ולא־יהיה יושב בה
both human beings and animals	מאדם ועד־בהמה
shall flee away	נדו הלכו :
(50:2-3 MT)	

50:2-3 refers to the devastation of Babylon's land, an idea that is extensively found in these oracles. The word שמה and its synonym שממה ("desolation") are used often in the oracles to describe the fate of Babylon: 50:13, 23; 51:26, 29, 37, 41, 43, 62. ישב is also used in contexts which refer to the depopulation of Babylon: 50:13, 40; 51:29, 37, 43, 62. Other land-related imagery is found in 50:16, according to which there will be starvation in the land of Babylon because there is no one to harvest its crops.[8] In vv. 26-27 we find the command to destroy Babylon's food supplies.[9] Land imagery is also found in 50:45, in which Babylon's inhabitants are metaphorically described as a flock of animals.[10]

Associated with the imagery of land here is the portrayal of

The verb לכד ("to take") occurs again in 50:9, 24; 51:31, 41, 56. בוש ("to be ashamed") is in 50:12 which refers to the shaming of Babylon as a mother. In 51:47 it refers to the land of Babylon, which suffers shame because Yhwh punishes its deities. In 51:17 בוש is found with פסל ("idol"). Other references to Babylon's idols are in 50:38; 51:17, 47, 52.

The verb עלה ("to go up" – v. 3) is used frequently to refer to an enemy coming against Babylon: 50:9, 21; 51:3, 16, 27, 42, 53. The phrase עלה עליה ("to go up against her" – v. 3) is in 50:9. The source of the threat is described as the north: קהל־גוים גדלים ("a company of great nations" – 50:9), עם ("a people") and גוי גדול ("a great nation" – 50:41), שדדים ("destroyers" – 51:48).

[8] McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:1267

[9] Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 419

[10] For an analysis of the flock imagery in these chapters, see Reimer, *Oracles*, 194-202.

Babylon as a feminine life-giving figure.[11] As a land, it is the source
of life for its inhabitants (50:16, 26-27), an idea also reflected in
50:12 in which Babylon is portrayed as mother (50:12). Babylon
is also a daughter, בת־בבל ("Daughter of Babylon" – 50:42), an
expression which personifies the city as a goddess and spouse of
the patronal deity.[12]

Another significant feminine life-giving image is the city (50:15,
29-30; 51:4, 12, 31, 44, 58), which is intertwined with that of Babylon
as a land. Babylon becomes a place which has inhabitants, dei-
ties, animals. It is an entity with inhabited space. In contrast, in
20:1-6 Babylon is a place of exile and of death. As a space, it is
the space of death. In 24:1 it is a place of exile, and in 24:10 it is
ארץ כשדים ("the land of the Chaldeans"), a land which sustains
the exiles of Judah. In 25:12-14 it is a land which will be destroyed.
In chap. 27 MT it is a place of banishment, while in chap. 29 MT
it is represented as a place of life. Here in chaps. 50–51, Babylon
is an inhabited living entity.

Another key idea in 50:2-3, which is associated with the image
of Babylon as a land, is that of the north as the origin of an at-
tack on Babylon. Vv. 2-3 contain both references to the north and
to a situation of war. In v. 3 the threat is from גוי מצפון ("a nation
from the north"), while the north is the source of the threat in
other places in the oracles: קהל־גוים גדלים ("a company of great
nations" – 50:9), עם ("a people") and גוי גדול ("a great nation" –
50:41), שודדים ("destroyers" – 51:48).[13]

A situation of war is suggested in vv. 2-3 by the imperatives הגידו,

---

[11] The feminine imagery is discussed by Reimer, *Oracles*, 204-208. As his study
is confined to chaps. 50–51 MT, he does not explore how the imagery for Baby-
lon shifts in these chapters.

[12] Aloysius Fitzgerald, "The Mythological Background for the Presentation
of Jerusalem as a Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the OT," *CBQ* 34
(1972) 403-416. For the designation of a capital city as daughter, see his "*BT WLT*
and *BT* as Titles for Capital Cities," *CBQ* 37 (1975) 167-183.

[13] As was the case with the reference to the enemy from the north in the
early chapters of the book, some scholars have proposed a specific historical
referent for Babylon's attacker: e.g., the Medes (Bellis, *Structure*, 35), "Cyrus and
the Persians" (Brueggemann, *To Build, To Plant*, 260). Holladay understands the
referent of גוי מצפון ("a nation out of the north" – 50:2) originally as "the exiles
of Israel who could be said to have come to Babylon along the Euphrates from
the north", and subsequently as Cyrus (Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 415). Again, as was
the situation with references to the north in the early chapters, it is not possi-
ble to establish a historical referent for the expression. For the latter opinion,
see also McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:1253; Reimer, *Oracles*, 176-180.

השמיעו and אמרו which introduce the instructions for messengers.
The expression שׂאו נס also has a military significance.[14] These
expressions occur again in chaps. 50–51 MT when the enemy is
summoned to come against Babylon: נגד hifil in 50:28 and 51:31;
שׁמע hifil in 50:29 and 51:27; שׂאו נס is in 51:12,27. The imagery of
war is also suggested by references to the death of Babylon's sol-
diers and inhabitants (e.g., 50:14, 30, 35-38; 51:3, 40).

The use of feminine imagery for Babylon intensifies the na-
ture of Yhwh's destruction. Where Babylon is represented as a
land and a city, the destruction of the motherland represents the
wiping out of the source of life; that of the city represents the
loss of security and protection.[15] The city is the place of the tem-
ple from where the deity's protection extends over the city, and
its walls represent protection and security.[16]

Where Babylon is personified as a woman, there is a more dis-
turbing side to the representation of Yhwh's action. In 51:33 Baby-
lon is personified as בת־בבל ("daughter of Babylon"), and is por-
trayed as a threshing floor which will be trampled on. Here the
combination of the imagery of stomping and threshing with the
personification of Babylon as a woman could imply sexual humil-
iation and violence.[17] The presence of masculine and feminine
imagery in texts about warfare and conquest opens a critical area
of interpretation, especially when Yhwh is represented as the male
aggressor and peoples or nations are represented as feminine fig-
ures who are the objects of physical and sexual violence.[18]

In contrast, earlier in the book (chaps. 20–27 MT) Babylon in
its time of dominance was predominantly portrayed by the met-
onymic and masculine figure of its king.[19] However in chaps. 50–

---

[14] So, Thomas, "מלאו in Jeremiah IV.5," 47-52. For warfare as the background
for vv. 2-5, see Christensen, *Prophecy and War*, 259.

[15] Reimer, *Oracles*, 205-8.

[16] For the city as feminine, see Elaine R. Follis, "The Holy City as Daughter,"
Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry (ed. Elaine R. Follis; JSOTSup 40; Sheffield:
JSOT, 1987) 176-177. For the significance of the city walls, see Lewis Mumford,
The City in History: Its origins, its transformations and its prospects (Harmondsworth,
Middlesex: Secker and Warburg, 1961) 80-87.

[17] So, Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 841.

[18] For an introduction to this important hermeneutical issue, see the collec-
tion of articles entitled "Women, War and Metaphor: Language and Society in
the Study of the Hebrew Bible," *Semeia* 61 (1993).

[19] For the significance of the masculine as the imagery of conquest, see Fol-
lis, "The Holy City," 176.

51, whose principal theme is Babylon's demise, there are only five references to its king. 50:18, 43 and 51:31 have מלך בבל ("the king of Babylon"), while 50:17 and 51:34 have נבוכדראצר מלך בבל ("King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon").

Besides the dominant images of Babylon as a land and city, there are a number of other images which contribute to the portrait of Babylon as the alien other, the enemy both of Judah and Yhwh. Babylon is represented as a lion (50:17-20), another Pharaoh (vv. 31-34), a dragon (51:34), a figure like the tower of Babel in Genesis 11 (Jer 51:53), a war club (51:20). These images are all masculine, and are used to describe Babylon as the conquering enemy. They fit the pattern according to which a dominant figure is represented by masculine imagery, while the subjugated figure is represented by feminine imagery.

In 50:17-20 Babylon is represented by the metonymic figure of Nebuchadrezzar, who is portrayed as a lion:

Israel is a hunted sheep	שה פזורה ישראל
driven away by lions.	אריות הדיחו
First the king of Assyria	הראשון אכלו מלך אשור
devoured it,	וזה האחרון
and now at the end	עצמו
King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon	נבוכדראצר
has gnawed its bones"	מלך בבל
(Jer 50:17)	

Both the Babylonian and Assyrian kings are metaphorically represented as lions who devour Israel. The description of the Babylonians as שסי נחלתי ("plunderers of my heritage" – 50:11) echoes the description of the Assyrian king in Isa 10:13: גבולת עמים ועתידתיהם שושתי ואסיר ("I have removed the boundaries of the people and have plundered their treasuries").[20]

The Babylonian king is also represented as another Pharaoh in Jer 50:29-34. In v. 32 Babylon is addressed as זדון ("pride"): הנני אליך זדון ("I am against you, O arrogant one" – 50:31). The word זדון ("arrogance") links vv. 31-32 with vv. 33-34. The verb זיד ("to act arrogantly") is used of the Egyptians in Neh 9:10: ותתן אתת ומפתים בפרעה ובכל-עבדיו ובכל-עם ארצו כי ידעת כי הזידו עליהם

---

[20] Reading with the *Ketib*. For this, see Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 229; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 413. The *Qere* has ועתודתיהם ("their rams"), a reading which does not fit the context.

For שושתי as the *polel* of שכה, see Mandelkern, *Concordantiae*, 1218; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 413.

("You performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants and all the people of his land, for you knew that they acted insolently against our ancestors").[21] The association of Babylon with the Pharaoh is sustained in 50:33-34. The presence of the verbs מאן ("refuse") and שלם *piel* ("let go"), together with the description of Yhwh as the גואל ("redeemer") also points to imagery from the Exodus story. In 50:33-34 Babylon, like the Pharaoh, is an oppressor against whom Yhwh acted.[22]

Another image used to describe Nebuchadrezzar is that of a monster: אכלנו הממנו נבוכדראצר מלך בבל הציגנו כלי ריק בלענו כתנין ("King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon has devoured me, he has crushed me; he has made me an empty vessel, he has swallowed me like a monster" – 51:34).[23] The imagery of swallowing is also in v. 44 which with v. 34 frame material about Yhwh's threatened destruction of Babylon.[24] While in 51:34 Nebuchadrezzar is the subject of the verb בלע ("to swallow"), its subject in v. 44 is Bel: ופקדתי על־בל בבבל והצאתי את־בלעו מפיו ("I will punish Bel in Babylon, and make him disgorge what he has swallowed"). V. 44 thus associates Nebuchadrezzar with Bel, and identifies the conflict as one between Yhwh and the Babylonian deity.[25]

The image of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11 is echoed in the representation of Babylon in 51:53: כי תעלה בבל השמים וכי תבצר מרום עזה מאתי יבאו שדדים לה ("Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify her strong height, from me destroyers would come upon her"). The echo is suggested by the expression עלה...השמים ("to mount up to heaven").[26] עלה...השמים also occurs in contexts in which people try to escape from Yhwh: אם־יחתרו בשאול משם ידי תקחם ואם־יעלו השמים משם אורידם ("Though they dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them

---

[21] The arrogance of the Egyptians is also in Exod 18:11: עתה ידעתי כי־גדול יהוה מכל־האלהים כי בדבר אשר זהו עליהם ("Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods, because he delivered the people from the Egyptians, when they dealt arrogantly with them").

[22] So, Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 420.

[23] Following the *Qere*, as do the versions. See Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 399; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:1323.

[24] On 51:34-44 as a section, see Aitken, "Oracles," 50; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 847.

[25] Bellis, *Structure*, 176.

[26] As noted by Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 430-431; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:1343.

down" – Amos 9:2). Given the parallelism in Jer 51:53 between עלה בבל השמים ("Babylon should mount up to heaven") and תבצר מרום עזה ("she should fortify her strong height"), we can see also another level of meaning – viz., that Yhwh's punishment cannot be avoided, either by fleeing or by the seemingly most impregnable fortification.[27]

The final image for consideration is found in the unit 51:20-26 where Babylon is described as מפץ ("hammer", "war club").[28] Vv. 20-26 consist of vv. 20-23 which are built around the repetitions of נפץ ("to smash"). Vv. 25-26, framed by the expression נאם־יהוה ("says the LORD"), are thematically different. V. 24 is the centre point, and is connected to vv. 20-23 by a verb in the waw-consecutive perfect.[29] The representation of Babylon here is similar to that in 50:23, where Babylon is described by the similar image of פטיש ("hammer").

The most significant feature of the representation of Babylon in these verses is the repetition of the waw-consecutive verb ונפצ-תי ("and I will smash"), a construction indicates that vv. 20-23 refer to the future.[30] Babylon will therefore continue to be used by Yhwh an instrument of punishment into the future. The effect of vv. 20-23 is to dampen the sense that Babylon's demise is imminent. An emphasis on the future in vv. 20-23 exists in tension with vv. 25. Following the sequence of waw-consecutive verbs ונפצתי (vv. 20-23) and ושלחתי ("I will repay" – v. 24), the beginning of v. 25

---

[27] Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 431; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:1343; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 315; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 768;

[28] For Babylon as the referent of מפץ, see Bellis, *Structure*, 145; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:1310-1311; Reimer, *Oracles*, 226; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 309; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 756. Holladay argues that it refers to Babylon (*Jeremiah* 2, 406).

[29] The boundaries of vv. 20-26 are determined by the nature of what precedes (vv. 15-19) and what follows (vv. 27-33). Vv. 15-19, as a polemic against idols, are thematically different to vv. 20-26. The former are constructed in the third person, whereas vv. 20-26 are in the second person masculine singular, except for v. 24 which has a second person masculine plural addressee. Vv. 27-33, with second person masculine plural imperatives (vv. 27-29), begin as a call to battle. In vv. 29-32 the battle unfolds and Babylon is defeated. It concludes with a reaffirmation that Babylon's demise is inevitable.

[30] A future translation for ונפצה is given by Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 397; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:1311. "And I would smash" is the translation given by Rosenberg, *Jeremiah*, 2:400-401. A summary of the various interpretations is given by McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:1311-1312.

has הנני אליך הר המשחית ("I am against you, O destroying moun-
tain").[31]

The shift in tenses between the verbs in vv. 20-24 and those in
v. 25 point to a tension in the text between the promise of Baby-
lon's demise and its fulfilment. The tension can also be seen in
51:27-33. Here the defeat of Babylon is first presented as already
realised, and the messengers go to the Babylonian king to break
the news: כי־נלכדה עירו מקצה ("that his city is taken from end to
end" – v. 31). Then a temporal shift comes at the end of the unit
whereby Babylon's demise is projected into the future: בת־בבל
כגרן עת הדריכה עוד מעט ובאה עת־הקציר לה ("Daughter Babylon is
like a threshing floor at the time when it is trodden; yet a little
while and the time of her harvest will come" – v. 33).[32] While Baby-
lon's demise is guaranteed, there is not yet in sight an end to
her dominance.

A feature common to the images discussed in this section is
that they signify the opposition between Yhwh and Babylon, and
contribute to an understanding of Babylon as the archetypal en-
emy of Yhwh, and as a figure whose relationship with Judah is
one of opposition. The shift in Babylon's standing corresponds
to a shift in the imagery used in its portrayal. In chaps. 50-51
the dominant imagery for Babylon is feminine, where it is repre-
sented as a city, a land and a mother. When represented in this
way, Babylon is portrayed as defeated and devastated. Masculine
images in chaps. 50-51 MT contribute to the conventional pic-
ture of Babylon as the proud and cruel conqueror which over-
stepped the limits of the power given it by Yhwh.

3. Babylon and Judah: Parallel Figures

While Babylon is predominantly represented in chaps. 50-51 MT
as the alien and enemy, a secondary representation can also be
discerned in these chapters. It depicts Babylon not as the enemy
and a figure opposed to Judah, but as one like Judah. Both are

---

[31] For the use of הנה with the present participle as signifying an emphasis on
the imminence of an action see *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 360.

[32] The continuing role of Babylon as Yhwh's instrument is recognised by
Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 309. He sees v. 33 as indicating that its demise is imminent
(*ibid.*), a view shared by Reimer, *Oracles*, 85.

portrayed as sinful and guilty. Both are subject to the same pun-
ishment and to the authority of the same deity. The secondary
representation exists in tension with, and undermines a simplis-
tic perception of Babylon as the alien other.

There are several clear signals which point to this secondary
representation. The first for consideration here is the reference
in chaps. 50–51 MT to the guilt of Judah. The second is the rep-
etition in the oracles against Babylon of language used in the
condemnation of Judah in chaps. 2–6.

The guilt of Judah is a theme in vv. 4-20. This section is framed
by vv. 4 and 20, both of which have the only instances of the com-
pound temporal formula בימים ההמה ובעת ההיא ("In those days and
at that time"). Both verses contain the verb בקש ("to seek"), the
expression נאם־יהוה ("says the LORD"), and both verses refer ex-
plicitly to Judah and Israel. Material about the fall of Babylon (vv.
6-19) is framed by references to the guilt of Judah and Israel.[33]

In 50:4-5, the first of the smaller units within vv. 4-20, Judah
and Jerusalem are portrayed as on a journey in which they seek
Yhwh: הלוך ובכי ילכו ואת־יהוה אלהיהם יבקשׁו ("they shall come weeping
as they seek the LORD their God" – v. 4).[34] While on one level it
is a journey to Zion, at another level it is a return in repentance
to Yhwh: באו ונלוו אל־יהוה ברית עולם לא תשׁכח ("And they shall come
and join themselves to the LORD by an everlasting covenant that
will never be forgotten" – v. 5).[35] The implication of vv. 4-5 is that
Israel and Judah have sinned. Hence their weeping and seeking
Yhwh.

What was implicit in v. 4 is explicit in v. 20: יבקשׁ את־עון ישׂראל
ואיננו ואת־חטאת יהודה ולא תמצאינה כי אסלח לאשׁר אשׁאיר ("the iniqui-
ty of Israel shall be sought, and there shall be none; and the sins
of Judah, and none shall be found; for I will pardon the rem-

---

[33] For vv. 4-20 as a unit, see Aitken, "Oracles," 31; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 823. Bel-
lis identifies vv. 2-20 as a poem with "a concentric structure" (*Structure*, 33).
However her analysis does not adequately account for the inclusion in the poem
of vv. 2-3, and does not give sufficient weight to the framing characteristics of
vv. 4 and 20.

[34] On the covenant with Yhwh as the goal of the journey, see Reimer, *Ora-
cles*, 31.

[35] Reading ובאו ונלוו ("and they come and join themselves") where the MT
has באו ונלוו, as do Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 391; Reimer, *Oracles*, 29; Thompson,
Jeremiah, 730. An alternative reading, באו ונלוה ("come and let us join ourselves")
is proposed by McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:1251; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 298.

nant that I have spared"). Whereas in v. 4 the focus is on the
action of the people, in v. 20 it shifts to that of Yhwh, who has
taken away עון ("guilt") and חטא ("sin").[36]

These two terms are used also used of Babylon. In 51:6 there
is a reference to the guilt of Babylon: אל־תדמו בעונה ("do not per-
ish because of her guilt"). In 50:14 Babylon is said to have sinned:
כי ליהוה חטאה ("for she has sinned against the LORD"). The repre-
sentation of both Judah and Babylon as sinful and guilty means
that Babylon is not simply the alien other. What is particularly
striking here is not the designation of Judah's sinfulness *per se*,
but the context in which the designation occurs. In the oracles
which proclaim punishment on Babylon for what it has done, there
can also be seen the grounds for Judah's own punishment – viz.,
its sin. In the very proclamation of Judah's restoration, its sinful
character is brought to the fore. The shared characteristic of guilt
and sin breaks a simplistic interpretation which sees the two fig-
ures simply as polar opposites.

Another strategy in these chapters which breaks down the re-
lationship of opposition between the two figures is the repetition
in chaps. 50–51 MT of material found earlier in the oracles against
Judah. While the presence of such repetitions has been widely
noted by scholars, their literary function has not been given suf-
ficient attention.[37] The material in question consists of small units
of text, phrases and key words.

---

[36] 51:5 is a text which can also be interpreted as referring to the guilt of
Israel and Judah. Such an interpretation depends on the referent of אראם. If it
is Judah and Israel, then we have another reference to their guilt in the con-
text of the demise of Babylon (51:1-5). However because of the context of v. 5,
a number of critics propose that the referent of אראם is not Judah and Israel
but Babylon (e.g., Bellis, *Structure*, 110; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 396; McKane, *Jere-
miah*, 2:1299; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 306). Reimer argues that the referent of אראם is
Babylon, but then proposes that אשם means "punishment" and not "guilt", as it
usually translated (*Oracles*, 68).

[37] These repetitions have been interpreted in a variety of ways. A passage
like 51:15-19, which repeats 10:12-16 is dismissed by some as an intrusion (so,
e.g., Cornill, *Jeremia*, 511-512; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 405). Another approach is to
emphasise the stereotypical character of the language. The creators of the Jere-
miah tradition had a common stock of words, phrases and images which they
adapted to the different situations. Passages such as 6:22-24 and 50:41-43 exem-
plify this process (so, e.g., Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 833-834; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 754-
755). A further approach to these two passages is to identify 50:41-43 as an ad-
aptation of 6:22-24 to a new historical situation. Just as Judah was invaded by
the Babylonians, so now Babylon itself will also suffer an invasion from the north
(so, e.g., Jones, *Jeremiah*, 533; Weiser, *Jeremia*, 440). Thompson is more specific,
interpreting 50:41-43 as referring to Cyrus (*Jeremiah*, 746).

The largest unit in question is 51:15-19. It repeats 10:12-16, which is part of a polemic against idols in 10:1-16. The presence of such passage in chaps. 50–51 MT is consistent with 50:2-3, which introduces the oracles against Babylon and refers to the demise of Marduk.[38] The context of 51:15-19 is the opposition between Yhwh and Babylon. According to vv. 1-14 the destruction of Babylon is intended and brought about by Yhwh: נשבע יהוה צבאות בנפשו כי אם־מלאתיך אדם כילק ועֹנו עליך הידה ("The LORD of hosts has sworn by himself: Surely I will fill you with troops like a swarm of locusts, and they shall raise a shout of victory over you"—v. 14).[39] It is an act of divine vengeance on Babylon, especially for its destruction of the temple.[40]

The function of 51:15-19 within chaps. 50–51 MT is to affirm Yhwh's sovereign power over both creation and history, in the face of which the idols of the nations are completely impotent. It is Yhwh's power which will bring down Babylon.[41] 51:15-19 also takes the reader back to 10:12-16, which is part of the longer polemic against idols in 10:1-16.[42] These latter verses occur near the end of the collection of oracles against Judah in chaps. 2–10, and situate the judgment against the backdrop of Yhwh's power over other nations and their deities. 10:1-16 are preceded by an

---

Reimer makes some observations about the repetitions but does not pursue or elaborate them. He sees the repetition in chaps. 50–51 of imagery about a threat from the north as "providing a link with the rest of the book" (*Oracles*, 180). For a similar comment on the repetition of the imagery of depopulation see *ibid.* 185, 240. The use of similar imagery against Babylon is also an indication that these oracles should not be viewed primarily as oracles of salvation for Judah. Their function as proclaiming judgment on Babylon should be given primary consideration (*ibid.*, 240-241).

[38] On the identification of Bel and Marduk, see McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:1252; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 300; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 732.

[39] So, Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 305.

[40] Bellis, *Structure*, 116.

[41] So, Bellis, *Structure*, 137-138; C. von Orelli, *The Prophecies of Jeremiah* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889) 365; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 309; A. W. Streane, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah together with the Lamentations* (The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; Cambridge: The University Press, 1899) 333-334; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 754-755; Weiser, *Jeremia*, 442.

[42] Issues of the inner coherence and compositional history have dominated the study of 10:1-16. For this discussion, see e.g., P. R. Ackroyd, "Jeremiah X. 1-16," *JTS* NS 14 (1963) 385-390; Bogaert, "Les mécanismes rédactionnels," 222-238; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 324-330; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:216-228; Thomas W. Overholt, "The Falsehood of Idolatry: An Interpretation of Jer. X 1-16," *JTS* NS 16 (1965) 1-12.

oracle of doom directed against various nations, one of which is
Judah:[43]

v. 25 The days are surely	הנה ימים באים
coming, says the LORD,	נאם־יהוה
when I will punish	ופקדתי
all those who are circumcised	על־כל־מול
only in the foreskin:	בערלה:
v. 26 Egypt, Judah, Edom, the	על־מצרים ועל־יהודה ועל־אדום
Ammonites, Moab, and all those	ועל־בני עמון ועל־מואב
with shaven temples who live	ועל כל־קצוצי פאה
in the desert. For all these	הישבים במדבר
nations are uncircumcised, and	כי כל־הגוים ערלים
all the house of Israel is	וכל־בית ישראל
uncircumcised in heart.	ערלי־לב:
(9:25-26)	

What is particularly interesting in the list of the nations is that
Judah is in second position. Given that the focus of chaps. 2–10
to this point is the judgment of Yhwh against Judah (and Israel),
and there are to this point no threats against Egypt, the reader
would expect to find Judah first in the list. The order of the na-
tions in v. 25 represents a shift in focus, in which the judgment
against Judah is situated in the larger context of Yhwh's sover-
eignty over and punishment of the nations. A function then of
51:15-19 is to bring the reader back to 10:1-16, a place in the book
where the same affirmation of Yhwh's supremacy is made, but in
the context of the judgment against Judah. It is the same supreme
God who acts against both Judah and Babylon.

50:41-43 is the other instance in chaps. 50–51 MT of a repeti-
tion of a unit from earlier in the book. 50:41-43 is almost a ver-
batim repetition of 6:22-23.[44] What is significant is that both Judah
and Babylon are portrayed in the same way. Both are threatened
from the north by an enemy which has superhuman characteris-
tics, and both react in the same way. The presence of the expres-

---

[43] The translation of 9:25-26 which follows amends that of the NRSV in
v. 25. Where the NRSV has "I will attend to" for על ופקדתי, I have followed the
RSV, whose translation, "I will punish", shows more clearly the negative conno-
tations of פקד with על. On this see André, *Determining the Destiny*, 191-192.

[44] The two passages show some differences, but these are not substantial: where
6:23 has בת־ציון ("daughter of Zion"), in 50:42 we find בת־בבל ("daughter of
Babylon"); 6:24 has שמענו את־שמעו ("We heard the news of them"), whereas 50:43
has שמע מלך־בבל את־שמעם ("the king of Babylon heard the news of them"). For
the discussion in a different context of this instance of repetition, see above,
64-67.

sion עם...מארץ צפון ("a people...from the north") in 50:41 signi-
fies that the judgment against Babylon originates from the same
source as that against Judah. Furthermore the resumption of 6:22-
24 in 50:41-43 brings together the figures of Judah and Babylon.
They are represented as under attack by the same deity, they are
threatened in the same way, and they react in the same way.

In the very part of the book in which Babylon's demise is an-
nounced and Judah is thereby vindicated, the reader is taken back
to material in which Judah itself is threatened with the same disaster
by the same deity. Such a literary strategy undermines the view
that Judah and Babylon are essentially polar opposites – the former
the quintessential enemy of Yhwh, the latter the innocent victim
about to be vindicated.[45]

The links between the oracles against Babylon and those against
Judah also exist at the level of key words and phrases. There is
an extensive network of linkages which also reinforce the rela-
tionship of similarity between Judah and Babylon. The repetitions
are gathered together below according to four different themes.
A fifth category contains miscellaneous phrases or key words.

a) Descriptions of the agent of judgment:

	Oracles vs. Babylon	*Oracles vs. Judah*
צפון ("the north")	50:3 – גוי מצפון ("from out of the north a nation")	1:14; 4:6; 6:1 מצפון...הרעה ("from the north... evil")
	50:9 – קהל־גוים גדלים מארץ צפון ("a company of great nations from the land of the north")	1:15 – כל־משפחות ממלכות צפונה ("all the tribes of the king-doms of the north")
	50:41 – עם מצפון...וגוי גדול ("a people from the north...and a mighty nation")	6:22 – עם...מצפון וגוי גדול ("a people from the north...and a mighty nation")

---

[45] While the repetition of 6:22-24 in 50:41-43 is evidence of the existence of
stereotypical language which can be employed in different contexts (so, Car-
roll, *Jeremiah*, 202-203), such an explanation does not address the literary effect
of the repetition. For a view similar to that of Carroll, see also Cornill, *Jeremia*,
332; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 2:1293.

	Oracles vs. Babylon	Oracles vs. Judah
	51:48 – מצפון השודדים ("destroyers out of the north")	10:22 – רעש גדול מארץ צפון ("a great commotion from the land of the north")

b) References to the depopulation of the land: A recurring image for the fate of Babylon is that of depopulation. The language of depopulation also occurs frequently in the oracles against Judah:

	Oracles vs. Babylon	Oracles vs. Judah
שמה, משׁשׁה ("desolation")	50:3, 13; 51:26, 29, 41, 43	4:7, 27; 5:30; 6:8; 8:21; 9:10; 10:22, 25; 18:16; 19:8
אין יושׁב ("without inhabitant")	51:29, 37, 43	4:7, 29 9:10 – מבלי יושׁב ("without inhabitant")
עבר ("to pass through")	51:43 – ולא־יעבר...בהאדם ("through which no mortal passes")	9:9 – מבלי־אישׁ עבר ("no one passes through"); 9:11 – מבלי עבר ("no one passes through")
רעשׁ ("to quake")	50:46; 51:29	4:26, 27; 8:16
בקק ("to empty")	51:2	19:7

c) Language of guilt and punishment: The oracles against Babylon and those against Judah share similar images and expressions for guilt and punishment:

	Oracles vs. Babylon	Oracles vs. Judah
פקד ("to punish")	50:18, 31, 44; 51:27, 44, 47, 52	5:9, 29; 6:6, 15; 8:12; 9:8; 11:22; 14:10
מחרון אף־יהוה ("from the fierce anger of the LORD")	51:45; 50:13 – מקצף יהוה ("Because of the wrath of the LORD")	4:8, 26; 12:13
נקמת יהוה ("the vengeance of the LORD")	50:15, 28; 51:6, 36	5:9, 29; 9:8
כי ליהוה חטאה ("for she has sinned against the LORD")	50:14	3:25; 8:14

כשל ("to stumble")
with נפל ("to fall")   50:32   8:12

d) Military imagery: Common to the oracles against Babylon and those against Judah is the imagery of warfare. The following illustrate a shared military vocabulary in both sets of oracles:

	Oracles vs. Babylon	*Oracles vs. Judah*
חרב ("sword")	50:35-38	2:10, 30; 4:10; 5:12, 17; 6:25; 9:15; 11:22; 14:12-18; 15:2-3
שחת *hifil* ("to destroy")	51:11, 20-26, 29	4:7; 5:10, 26; 6:5, 28
שמע *hifil* ("to announce")	50:2	4:5, 16; 5:20
נגד *hifil* ("to announce")	50:2, 28; 51:31	4:5, 15; 5:20
נס ("signal")	51:12, 27	4:6, 21
ערך ("to draw up for battle")	50:14	6:23
כל־דרכי קשת ("all you who draw the bow")	50:14	6:23
חללים ("slain")	51:3	14:18
שלט ("quiver")	51:11	אשפה ("quiver")—5:16
קדש *piel* ("consecrate")	51:27-28	6:4
בחור ("young man")	50:30	6:11; 9:20; 11:22
עלה ("to go up")	50:3, 9, 21, 44; 51:16, 27, 42, 50, 53	4:7, 13; 5:10; 6:4, 5; 9:20
עלה מסביב ("to come up against from every side")	51:2	4:17

e) Miscellaneous imagery: There are also other words and ideas which are common to both set of oracles. Those listed below are unrelated thematically, but are gathered here for the sake of order and convenience:

	Oracles vs. Babylon	*Oracles vs. Judah*
ארי, אריה ("lion")	50:46	4:7; 5:6
שאר ("to remain")	50:26	8:3; 11:23; 15:9; 24:8
מרה ("to rebel")	50:21	4:17; 5:23
זרה ("to winnow")	51:1	15:7
זמם ("to devise")	51:12	4:28
פסיל ("idol")	50:38; 51:44, 47, 52; 50:3 – עצב ("shape"), גלול ("idol")	8:19; chaps. 2–3: the polemic against Judah's worship of the Baals

The effect of these repetitions, both of units, words and phrases, is to clearly link the judgment against Babylon with that against Judah. In many respects the terms of Babylon's condemnation are the same as those of Judah's. The two share the same fate of the devastation of their land and cities which is sanctioned by Yhwh.

While the dominant representation of Babylon in chaps. 50–51 MT is as the enemy of both Judah and Yhwh, the secondary representation is quite different. According to the latter Babylon is a figure which resembles Judah. Both are said to be sinful and guilty. Both are subject to the same deity and will be punished in the same way. The association between the two is brought about by the repetition in chaps. 50–51 MT of material used in chaps. 4–6 to describe the judgment of Judah. The effect of the repetitions is to take the readers of chaps. 50–51 MT back to chaps. 4–6. As they read and celebrate the demise of Babylon they are confronted with the same reality for Judah. Even in the jubilation of Babylon's imminent downfall, the spectre of Judah's own punishment and destruction is present.

4. *Comparison: Babylon in the Book of Isaiah*

Within the book of Isaiah there are also oracles against Babylon. As the following analysis shows, the representation of the figure of Babylon in these oracles is uniformly more negative than that in Jeremiah 50–51 MT.

The first part of the analysis is a study of the taunt song over the king of Babylon (Isa 14:3-23). The second part takes up the lament over Babylon (Isaiah 47). The third part is a comparison of the representations of Babylon in these passages with those in Jeremiah 50–51 MT.

4.1. *The Taunt Song over the King of Babylon (Isa 14:3-23)*

14:3-23 is a taunt song over the king of Babylon. It belongs to a larger unit, 13:1–14:23, whose superscription מַשָּׂא בָּבֶל אֲשֶׁר חָזָה יְשַׁעְיָהוּ בֶּן־אָמוֹץ ("the oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw" – 13:1) indicates that it contains threats against Babylon.

14:3-23 consist of the taunt song itself (vv. 4b-23) preceded by its introduction.[46] Through its construction as a dirge it parodies the usual laments that would accompany the death of such a figure.[47]. It begins with a dirge for the demise of Babylon in vv. 4b-6. Then follows the reaction of the earth (vv. 7-8), the welcome to Sheol (vv. 9-17), the denial of remembrance for the king (vv. 18-21) and a conclusion (vv. 22-23).[48] In parts the song is highly mythological in its imagery and language.[49]

The king is identified in vv. 4b-6 as violent and evil. In v. 4 he is described by the participle נֹגֵשׂ ("oppressor") and the abstract noun מַדְהֵבָה ("arrogance").[50] In v. 6 this theme is further elabo-

---

[46] The characteristics of a taunt are given by Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 540.

[47] For the characteristics of the dirge, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 518-519.

[48] These divisions are those of Sweeney, except at one point (*Isaiah 1-39*, 219-220). He identifies vv. 21-23 as a unit with the heading "Concluding command to sacrifice sons" (*ibid.*, 220). The analysis above prefers vv. 22-23 as the final unit, because there is a shift to a first person Yhwh speech which begins and ends with the expression נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת (vv. 22, 23). From a thematic point of view, v. 21 belongs with vv. 18-20 because they share the common theme of the denial of remembrance.

[49] These are given a substantial treatment by Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 2:538-564.

[50] For נֹגֵשׂ as oppressor, see Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 34. The meaning of the word מַדְהֵבָה is unclear. However in its place DSS-Isa has מַרְהֵבָה. The root רהב supplies

rated: מכה עמים בעברה מכת בלתי סרה רדה באף אוים מרדף בלי חשך
("that struck down the peoples in wrath with unceasing blows,
that ruled the nations in anger with unrelenting persecution").
In v. 5 his rule is portrayed as evil, as the parallelism indicates:
שבר יהוה מטה רשעים שבט משלים ("The LORD has broken the staff of
the wicked, the scepter of rulers").

The next part of the song portrays the reactions of earth (vv.
7-8) and Sheol (vv. 9-17) to his demise. While that of the earth is
briefly described, the reaction in Sheol is more extensively de-
scribed. The king is said to be just like the other rulers in that
place: גם־אתה חלית כמונו ("You too have become as weak as we" –
v. 10). Deprived of his power he is now reduced to the same level
as those he once conquered. Yet, in another sense, he is even
more deprived. Where the other rulers have thrones on which to
sit (v. 9), his place is infested with vermin: תחתיך יצע רמה ומכסיך
תולעה ("maggots are the bed beneath you, and worms are your
covering" – v. 11).[51]

The extent of his humiliation is also reflected in vv. 12-16 in
which the grandiose dreams of his former position are contrast-
ed with the abysmal reality of his present condition.[52] In v. 12 we
have the parallel expressions נפלת משמים ("you are fallen from
heaven") and נגדעת לארץ ("you are fallen to the ground"). In vv.
13 and 14 up-down imagery is used to describe his former posi-
tion: עלה ("to go up" – vv. 13, 14), רום hifil ("to make high" –
v. 13), שמים ("heaven" – v. 13), ממעל כוכבי־אל ("above the stars of
God"—v. 13). By contrast in v. 15 there is the imagery of depths:
אל־שאול תורד אל־ירכתי־בור ("you are brought down to Sheol, to
the depths of the Pit").[53]

Vv. 12-16 portray the king as one who aspires to be among the
gods. The designation הילל בן־שחר ("O Day Star, son of Dawn" –
v. 12) is generally agreed to be of mythological origin, but there

---

the connotation of arrogance. So, Gosse, *Isaïe*, 206, n. 2; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 201,
n. 4.a; Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 2:533. See also *BDB*, 551.

[51] So Seth Erlandsson, *The Burden of Babylon: A Study of Isaiah 13:2-14:23* (Con-
BOT 4; Lund, Sweden: CWK Gleerup, 1970) 123.

[52] A typical feature of the funeral lament is the contrast between the happi-
ness of the past and the misery of the present. So, Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 2:539.

[53] The up-down imagery is noted by Chris A. Franke, "Reversals of Fortune
in the Ancient Near East: A Study of the Babylon Oracles in the Book of Isaiah,"
New Visions of Isaiah (eds. Roy F. Melugin, Marvin A. Sweeney; JSOTSup 214;
Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996) 115.

is no agreement about the specific referent of the term.[54] What follows in vv. 13-14 provides some information about the term's possible significance. The places in which the king aspires to be in vv. 13-14 are the dwelling places of the gods: הַשָּׁמַיִם ("the heavens"), מִמַּעַל לְכוֹכְבֵי־אֵל ("above the stars of God"), בְּהַר מוֹעֵד ("the mount of assembly"), בְּיַרְכְּתֵי צָפוֹן ("the heights of Zaphon"), בָּמֳתֵי עָב ("the tops of the clouds"). His aspirations are then summarised at the end of v. 14: אֶדַּמֶּה לְעֶלְיוֹן ("I will make myself like the Most High"). However his fate stands in clear contrast to his aspirations. Instead of reaching the heights, he finds himself in the very depths of Sheol.

The portrait of the king in v. 14 as someone who aspires to be like Yhwh is similar to the description of Babylon in 13:19 as צְבִי מַמְלָכוֹת תִּפְאֶרֶת גְּאוֹן כַּשְׂדִּים ("the glory of kingdoms, the splendour and pride of the Chaldeans").[55] The text contains a word-play on צְבִי, which occurs earlier in 13:14 with the meaning of "gazelle": וְהָיָה כִּצְבִי מֻדָּח...אִישׁ אֶל־עַמּוֹ יִפְנוּ ("Like a hunted gazelle...all will turn to their own people"). Babylon will become something which will be hunted down. A relatively rare word, צְבִי ("glory") is found in 4:2 with תִּפְאָרָה ("splendour") and גָּאוֹן ("pride"): בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה צֶמַח יְהוָה לִצְבִי וּלְכָבוֹד וּפְרִי הָאָרֶץ לְגָאוֹן וּלְתִפְאֶרֶת לִפְלֵיטַת יִשְׂרָאֵל ("On that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and the glory of the survivors of Israel"). While the precise meaning of צֶמַח יְהוָה is debated, it is clear that the qualities of צְבִי ("glory"), גָּאוֹן ("pride") and תִּפְאָרָה ("splendour") have their origin in Yhwh's mercy.[56] They are not of Israel's own making.[57]

---

[54] So, Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 237-238. The different opinions of scholars are summarised by Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 2:551-552.

[55] 13:19 belong to vv. 9-16, which are a proclamation of the day of Yhwh (Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 218-219).

The proclamation itself is held together by thematic features such as the day of Yhwh motif (13:6, 9; 14:3), and the effect of that day on Babylon (13:17-22; 14:3-23) and Judah (14:1-2). The connective כִּי ("for") links 14:1-2 with what precedes, and the expression וְהָיָה בְּיוֹם הָנִיחַ ("and on the day of rest") links 14:3-23 with what precedes. For this see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 226; also Wildberger, *Jesaja* 2:536-537. The translation above of יְהְיֶה בְּיוֹם הָנִיחַ is mine. The NRSV has the less literal rendering, "When the LORD has given you rest".

[56] For discussion of the possible meanings of צֶמַח יְהוָה, see Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 49; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 85; Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 165-166.

[57] As Wildberger notes, גָּאוֹן is regarded in the pre-exilic prophets as an expression of arrogance, which must be removed (*Isaiah 1-12*, 167). See also Paul,

This interpretation is confirmed by an analysis of the condemnation of the king of Assyria in 10:12, in which are found the terms תפארה and גדל ("pride"), a synonym for גאון. 10:12 begins an announcement of judgment, vv. 12-19, and is a proleptic statement of the punishment which is elaborated in vv. 15-19. The grounds for the punishment are given in vv. 13-14.[58] It is in vv. 12 and 13-14 that we can clearly see the meaning of תפארה and גאון. The grounds for the punishment are cast in general terms in v. 12: אפקד על־פרי־גדל לבב מלך־אשור ועל־תפארת רום עיניו ("I will punish the fruit of the arrogant boasting of the king of Assyria and the proud splendour of his eyes").[59] In v. 13 the grounds are more precise:

For he says:	כי אמר
"By the strength of my hand I	בכח ידי עשיתי
have done it, and by my wis-	ובחכמתי
dom, for I have understanding;	כי נבנותי
I have removed the boundaries	ואסיר גבולת עמים
of peoples,and have plundered	ועתידתיהם שושתי
their treasures;	
like a bull I have brought	ואוריד כאביר
down those who sat on thrones.	יושבים:
(Isa 10:13)	

The presence of כי ("for", "because") indicates that v. 13 is an explanation of what precedes. The grounds for the punishment are the king's assertion that his achievements are totally of his own making. This contradicts what immediately both precedes and follows. In 10:5-7 he is described as one sent and commanded by Yhwh. In 10:15 the king's assertion of his own power is interpreted as a denial of Yhwh's sovereignty.

The portrait of the king's pride and arrogance in 14:12-16 is followed by a description in vv. 18-20 of his final and perhaps most painful deprivation, the denial of remembrance. The grave of a king is usually a place of significance at which later generations will remember him. The king of Babylon however will be

---

Amos, 213; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 282. The range of meanings for גאון is given by D. Kellerman, "גאון," *TDOT*, 2:349-350.

[58] For the classification of 10:12-19 as an announcement of judgment, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 197.

[59] The translation here is that given by Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 229. That of the NRSV is not as literal. For פרי־גדל לבב it has "the arrogant boasting"; for תפארת רום עיניו "his haughty pride".

treated like the unwanted of society. He will have no grave of his own in which to lie, and hence no place at which he can be remembered.[60] The idea is further developed in v. 21, in which we find the execution of the curse in v. 20b. Remembrance will be denied him by the elimination of his descendants.[61]

In vv. 22-23 there is a shift in focus from the figure of the king to Babylon as a place, whose fate will be depopulation and destruction.[62] A similar fate is threatened for Babylon in 13:17-22, in which Babylon is represented as a city destined to suffer the same fate as Sodom and Gomorrah.[63] Babylon will not only be deprived of human inhabitants, but their place will be taken by wild animals from the desert. The ruins of Babylon will take on a demonic character (vv. 21-22).[64]

The taunt song over the king of Babylon in Isa 14:3-23 is a celebration of the demise and humiliation of a violent and evil ruler (vv. 4-8). In Sheol he is not only reduced to the same level as those kings whom he conquered in life, but he is even further humiliated. Where they still have thrones, he sits on a bed of maggots (vv. 9-11). The song contrasts his desire to be like Yhwh (vv. 12-14) with his fate of being reduced to complete insignificance, to the point where he will not even be remembered by subsequent generations (vv. 15-21).

In the concluding verses of the song there is a shift in focus from the figure of the king to the representation of Babylon as a place in which all human life has been destroyed (vv. 22-23).

---

[60] So, Erlandsson, *Burden*, 124; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 41-42; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 210.

[61] For the view that v. 21 is the realisation of the curse in v. 20b, see Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 211.

[62] Vv. 22-24 are ambiguous. Babylon may be represented here either as a city or a land. For the view that vv. 22-24 are about the destruction of the city of Babylon, see Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 43-44.

[63] V. 19 contrasts Babylon's present glory with the cities which are "the symbols of divine destruction above all others" (Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 199). For similar observations on the parallelism of Babylon with Sodom and Gomorrah, see Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-39*, 20; Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 2:521.

[64] So Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 199. According to Wildberger the ruins will take on a "macabre atmosphere" (*Jesaja*, 2:523-524). Of the animals named in the text, Kaiser notes that they "occupy a place between the world of animals and that of demons" (*Isaiah 1-39*, 20). For a similar view of the quasi-demonic character of the ruins, see Gosse, *Isaïe*, 164-165.

4.2. The Lament over Babylon (Isaiah 47)

Another text in the book of Isaiah which celebrates the demise
of Babylon is chap. 47. It belongs to a section of the book of Isa-
iah, chaps. 46–48, whose central theme is the impotence of idols.[65]

The section begins with a reference to the impotence of the
Babylonian deities:

46:1 Bel bows down,	כרע בל
Nebo stoops,	קרס נבו
their idols are	היו עצביהם
on beasts and cattle;	לחיה ולבהמה
these things you carry are	נשאתיכם עמוסות משא
loaded as burdens on weary	לעיפה:
animals.	
v. 2 They stoop, they bow	קרסו כרעו יחדו
down together; they cannot	לא יכלו
save the burden, but them-	מלט משא
selves go into captivity.	ונפשם בשבי הלכה:
(Isa 46:1-2)	

Babylon is represented here by the metonymic figure of their
deities. While the verb כרע ("to bow down") is found in various
contexts in which a deity is involved, its subject is usually a hu-
man being who bows down to the deity.[66] Its use here in Isa 46:1,
in which a god is its subject, points to the humiliation of the Baby-
lonian deities. The material dealing with Babylon has to be con-
sidered in this context.[67]

---

[65] So, Chris Franke, *Isaiah 46, 47, and 48: A New Literary-Critical Reading* (Biblical
and Judaic Studies 3; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1994) 262-264;
R. Martin-Achard, "Esaïe 47 et la tradition prophétique sur Babylone," *Prophecy:
Essays Presented to Georg Fohrer* (ed. J. A. Emerton; BZAW 150; Berlin/New York:
de Gruyter, 1980) 90.

[66] It also occurs as parallel to שחה *hith* ("to worship") – e.g., Ps 95:6; 2 Chron
7:3; 29:29). So, Franke, *Isaiah 46, 47 and 48*, 26.

[67] Chap. 46 is a piece which has a structural and thematic unity. Structurally
it is held together by the repetition of the expression שמעו אלי (vv. 3, 12) and
the repetition of key words: נשא ("to lift up, – vv. 1, 3, 4,7), עשה ("to do", "to
make" – vv. 4, 6, 11), ישע (*hif* "to save" – vv. 7, 13), סבל ("to bear", "to carry" –
vv. 4, 7), עמס ("to lift up", "to carry"). For this, see Franke, *Isaiah 46, 47 and 48*,
97.

The thematic unity of chap. 46 is developed around the contrast between
the saving power of Yhwh and the impotence of the Babylonian deities (*ibid.*,
72).

For a survey of the different opinions about the divisions of the chapter, see
ibid., 73-82.

Isaiah 47 is a text whose thematic and literary unity is well rec-
ognised, but whose divisions and genre are the subject of much
disagreement. Although it has the metre of the קִנָה ("lament"), it
also contains elements of other genres.[68] For the purposes of this
study, the following divisions are proposed: vv. 1-5, 6-7, 8-11 and
12-15. A string of feminine imperatives holds vv. 1-5 together. The
expression שְׁבִי...בַּת־כַּשְׂדִּים ("sit...virgin daughter Babylon") in vv.
1 and 5 act as a frame for vv. 1-5.[69] The theme of punishment for
Babylon also gives them a unity. V. 6 begins with the first person
singular form קָצַפְתִּי ("I was angry"), and in vv. 6-7 there are no
feminine singular imperatives. Vv. 6-7 are also held together by
the theme of Babylon as oppressor. Feminine singular impera-
tives, שִׁמְעִי ("hear") and עִמְדִי־נָא ("stand fast") are found at the be-
ginning of vv. 8 and 12 respectively. The theme of Babylon's claim
to be like Yhwh unifies vv. 8-11, while that of her helplessness
holds together vv. 12-15.

Babylon is metaphorically described in v. 1 as a virgin: בְּתוּלַת
בַּת־בָּבֶל ("virgin daughter Babylon"), a designation which has sev-
eral functions. When used of a city, the title בְּתוּלַת בַּת personifies
that city and attaches to it a divine character. It is a goddess who
is married to the city's patronal deity.[70]

This interpretation is also supported by the accusation against
Babylon in vv. 8 and 10: אֲנִי וְאַפְסִי עוֹד ("I am, and there is no oth-
er besides me"). As the presence of the word אֶפֶס shows, this ex-

---

[68] The discussion of its genre is well summarised by Franke:

"Various suggestions have been put forth regarding the background and
genre of the poem. It has been variously called a taunt song (Clifford) or
mocking song (Muilenburg), triumph song (Duhm), oracle against foreign
nations (Westermann, McKenzie), and a funeral song or dirge over the dead
(Whybray)" (*Isaiah 46, 47 and 48*, 145).

Likewise, its divisions are not agreed upon. Each of the following divides the
poem differently: Franke, *Isaiah 46, 47 and 48*, 153-158; Majella Franzmann, "The
City as Woman: The Case of Babylon in Isaiah 47," *AusBR* 43 (1995) 4-6; Melu-
gin, *Formation*, 135-136; Muilenburg, "Isaiah," 544; Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 170; Wes-
termann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 187-188.»

[69] So, Franzmann, "The City as Woman," 4.

[70] This idea was first suggested by Fitzgerald, "The Mythological Background,"
408-409. The idea is also found in his later treatment "*BTWLT* and *BT*," 177-
180. A more extensive investigation of the concept has been undertaken by F.
W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the
Hebrew Bible* (BibOr 44; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993) 75-90,
109-113.

pression signifies Babylon's attempt to usurp Yhwh's position as
God. אפס is found in 46:9, an affirmation of Yhwh's unique claim
to sovereignty: כי אנכי אל ואין עוד אלהים ואפס כמוני ("for I am God,
and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like me" –
see also 45:6, 14). The context in which chap. 47 is set also sup-
ports the view that the titles of Babylon in v. 1 personify her as a
goddess. The context is that of the absolute power of Yhwh over
other deities. That theme is reflected in chap. 46's portrayal of
Babylon through the metonymic figure of its deities which are
helpless and humiliated by Yhwh's power. Now in chap. 47 Baby-
lon is portrayed as woman and goddess upon whom Yhwh will
take vengeance.[71]

The designation of Babylon as a virgin also emphasises her
beauty and youth. Later references in the text to Babylon as
רכה וענגה ("tender and delicate" – v. 1) and עדינה ("lover of plea-
sures" – v. 8) support this interpretation.[72]

V. 6 accuses Babylon of cruelty in her conquest of Judah: ואתנם
בידך לא־שמת להם רחמים ("I gave them into your hand, you showed
them no mercy"). However in v. 7 the theme of Babylon's chal-
lenge to Yhwh's sovereignty is also introduced: לעולם אהיה גברת עד
("I shall be mistress forever"). While גברה refers to political pow-
er, the expression לעולם אהיה alludes to the revelation of the di-
vine name in Exod 3:14.[73] Babylon is presented as a deity. The
mimicing of Exod 3:14 portrays her as taking to herself the di-
vine name.

Her opposition to Yhwh is also suggested by Isa 47:9 with its
reference to sorcery and magic: ברב כשפיך בעצמת חבריך מאד ("in
spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchant-
ments" – v. 9; also vv. 12-13). The word כשפים ("sorceries") occurs

---

[71] The punishment consists of Babylon's reduction to the status of a slave
girl working at the mill, and of sexual humiliation or violence. For the discus-
sion on this latter point see Franzmann, "The City as Woman," 12 n. 44. As she
rightly points out, the portrait here of Yhwh has disturbing implications (*ibid.*,
17-19).

The designation of a city as virgin is usually found in contexts which describe
some disaster as coming upon that city. For this see Fitzgerald, "Mythological
Background," 416. His insight has been recognised by Dobbs-Allsopp (*Weep, O
Daughter of Zion*, 85) and Franke (*Isaiah 46, 47 and 48*, 108 n. 17).

[72] So, Franzmann, "The City as Woman," 8.

[73] For the significance of גברה, see Seitz, *Theology in Conflict*, 52-55. On the
allusion to Exod 3:14 see Franke, *Isaiah 46, 47 and 48*, 124.

in Mic 5:11 and Nah 3:4, passages which condemn idolatrous practices. The word חבר ("enchantment") is found with its synonym קסם in Deut 18:10-11, which condemn the practice of consulting diviners or sorcerers. In the theology of Deuteronomy this is seen as a repudiation of faith in Yhwh as Israel's God.[74]

In vv. 12-15 Babylon is presented as helpless. She is ridiculed for relying on magic in discerning the future, whereas this knowledge is the property of Yhwh alone.[75] Her magicians cannot save themselves and her from the fire of Yhwh's judgment.

Babylon is also ridiculed for her trust in her deities, who in the face of Judah's God are impotent and useless. In Isaiah 47 Babylon then is represented as the opponent of Yhwh who is to be humiliated and punished. She was allowed to subjugate Judah, but is now condemned for the cruelty of her behaviour (v. 6). The text gives the reader access to Babylon's inner world, in which she sees herself as the equal of Yhwh (vv. 7, 8, 10). At the same time she is held up to ridicule for her practice of magic. Her counsellors will be helpless in the face of Yhwh's judgment (vv. 12-15).

4.3. *Comparison: Babylon in Jeremiah and Isaiah*

The representation of Babylon in Jeremiah 50–51 MT is more benign than that in Isa 14:3-23 and chap. 47, and the language of its condemnation more restrained. The analysis which follows makes this clear.

The presence of both masculine and feminine imagery for Babylon in the relevant texts from each books provides a convenient way of ordering the material at hand. In particular the two passages from Isaiah are distinguished by the presence of masculine imagery in 14:4-23 and feminine imagery in chap. 47. The first part of this section of the study then is a comparison of the imagery in 14:4-23 with the masculine imagery for Babylon in Jeremiah 50–51 MT. The second part is a comparison of the imagery in Isaiah 47 with the feminine imagery for Babylon in Jeremiah 50–51 MT.

A significant difference between the representations of Babylon in the respective books is that in Isa 14:3-23 the king of Baby-

---

[74] On כשפים and חבר, see Franke, *Isaiah 46, 47 and 48*, 131-132.
[75] Franke, *Isaiah 46, 47 and 48*, 140-141.

lon is the subject of an entire literary composition, whereas in Jeremiah 50–51 MT there is no comparable composition. References to him in the latter extend to only a few verses: 50:17-18, 43; 51:34. While he is threatened with punishment in 50:18, he is never the object of taunting and ridicule in Jeremiah 50–51 MT as he is in Isa 14:3-23.

Another difference is the concentration of mythological language and imagery in the representation of the king in Isa 14:3-23. The passage represents a scene in Sheol, and uses mythological language associated with the dwelling place of the gods in vv. 12-14. While in Jer 51:34 Nebuchadrezzar is represented as a monster or perhaps a dragon, mythological language is absent from 50:17-18, 43. The language of 50:17-18 is both metaphorical and historical but not mythological. Nebuchadrezzar is represented metaphorically as a lion who devours Judah, and is associated with the king of Assyria. From the viewpoint of history both rulers carried out campaigns of conquest in Palestine.

A further difference is the absence in Jeremiah 50–51 MT of any reference to the king of Babylon's desire to be like Yhwh, an idea well developed in Isa 14:12-15. In Jeremiah 50–51 MT he is an opaque figure and the reader is not given access to his inner world. By contrast in Isa 14:3-23 his thoughts and ambitions are revealed to the reader. The representation of the king in Isa 14:13-14 as someone who aspires to be like Yhwh, has no explicit parallel in Jeremiah 50–51 MT. The passage in Jeremiah 50–51 MT that comes closest to Isa 14:12-15 is Jer 51:34. When v. 34 is read with v. 44, there emerges an implicit identification of Nebuchadnezzar with the deity Bel, and so the Babylonian king thus becomes an opponent of Yhwh.

There are also differences in the use of feminine imagery for Babylon in the respective texts. A notable difference here is the absence in Jeremiah 50–51 MT of explicit references to sexual humiliation or violence. In Isa 47:2-3 there are references to Babylon's clothing, a part of her anatomy and her nakedness. These are absent from Jeremiah 50–51 MT. While the language of physical violence is found explicitly in these chapters, reference to sexual humiliation and violence are implicit, as 51:33 shows. Here Babylon, personified as בת־בבל ("daughter of Babylon") is also represented as a threshing floor which will be trampled on. The combination of the imagery of stomping and threshing with the personi-

fication of Babylon as a woman could imply sexual humiliation as well as physical violence.[76]

In Jeremiah 50–51 MT the feminine imagery for Babylon is more extensively associated with its representation as a city and a land (e.g., 50:1-3; 51:1-6, 41-44). Babylon is represented as a mother in 50:12, as also in Isa 47:8-9. Spatial imagery, almost absent in Isaiah 47, is frequent in Jeremiah 50–51 MT. There are references to Babylon's inhabitants (e.g., 50:13, 30, 35-37, 39-40; 51:1, 4, 12, 22-24), its walls and buildings (50:1; 51:30, 58), its animals (50:27, 37), its crops (50:16,26).

There are then two significant differences between the representation of Babylon in Jeremiah 50–51 MT and that in Isa 14:3-23 and chap. 47. The first is in the respective portraits of the Babylonian king. In the Isaian texts he is represented in mythological terms, and is a well developed figure, whose inner thoughts and desires are accessible to the reader. In Jeremiah 50–51 MT there are only a few references to him. He is represented metaphorically, and is an opaque figure. Where the thoughts and desires of the king in Isaiah 14 show him clearly as an enemy of Yhwh, in Jer 51:33, 44 such an understanding is more indirectly expressed. In Jeremiah 50–51 MT the king of Babylon is not the demonised figure that he is in Isaiah 14.

The other significant difference is between the feminine representations of Babylon in the respective texts. In Jeremiah 50–51 MT the representation of Babylon as a land and city is more developed than in Isaiah 47. The attack against her in Jeremiah 50–51 MT is described primarily as a military invasion which will result in the destruction of the land and its inhabitants. In Isaiah 47 Babylon is personified as a woman and the attack is described in explicitly sexual terms. In Jeremiah 50–51 MT the language of physical violence is explicit, while that of sexual violence is implicit. In both instances the use of masculine and feminine imagery raises disturbing and difficult hermeneutical questions.

5. *Summary*

Jeremiah 50–51 MT consists of oracles which threaten punishment and destruction for Babylon. The dominant imagery for

---

[76] So, Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 841.

Babylon in these chapters is that of the enemy both of Yhwh and
Judah. At the same time, however, there is in these chapters a
secondary theme, that of the similarity between Babylon and Judah.
It subverts the view that Babylon is simply the enemy and the alien
other by highlighting the important similarities between the two
figures.

Such a representation of Babylon is not inconsistent with what
has been seen in other parts of the book. In 21:1-10 her king has
been represented as Yhwh's partner in the attack on Judah. In
chap. 27 MT he is portrayed as the inheritor of Judah's patriar-
chal promises, the equal of any Judean king, and has an author-
ity over creation comparable to the eponymous human ancestor
in the garden of Genesis 2. In chap. 29 MT Babylon is represent-
ed as a place just like Judah, and in which the blessings associat-
ed with life in the land can be experienced by the exiles.

Even in Jeremiah 50–51 MT, a text of sufficient length to pro-
vide the necessary scope to represent Babylon as cruel, evil, alien
and the archetypal enemy of both Yhwh and Judah, such a sim-
ple stereotypical portrait is undermined. While the relationship
between Babylon and Judah in Jeremiah 50–51 MT is represent-
ed primarily as one of opposition and hostility, there are also traces
in the text which point to a relationship of similarity between the
two. Both are portrayed as guilty and sinful; both are punished
by the same God and in the same way.

Where the reader would expect the most negative representa-
tion of Babylon, such a representation is not without qualifica-
tion. Even in oracles in which she is condemned and punished,
Babylon's relationship with Judah is represented as one both of
identity and difference.

CONCLUSION

This final chapter draws together the various insights which have come to light in the present study. It not only summarises them, but also explains their contribution to the interpretation of Jeremiah MT.

There are three sections to the conclusion. The first explores the significance of the synchronic method used in the study and gathers together the results of such a reading. The second brings together what has been said about the figure of Babylon and its representation in the book. The third explains how the representation of Babylon in Jeremiah MT helps our understanding of the book.

1. *The Significance of a Synchronic Reading*

The synchronic methodology used in this study has focussed on the internal relationships of words and expressions within the world of the text. It has been particularly attentive to the role of metaphor in the interpretation of Jeremiah MT in general and the figure of Babylon in particular. The significance of a synchronic reading for the interpretation of the book is treated under two headings. The first consists of a summary of important insights into individual texts that the approach has generated. The second takes up the contribution of metaphor in the present study's synchronic interpretation. Since the recognition of metaphor is situated within the context of a synchronic reading of the book, it is not always possible to separate the two.[1] In what follows some points under the first heading will need to be examined again under the second.[2]

---

[1] See below, 202.
[2] For an explanation of the present study's synchronic methodology and understanding of metaphor, see above, 10-16.

1.1. *A Synchronic Reading: General Observations*

A synchronic reading of the text in the present study has yielded significant results, which will be treated under the following headings: the interpretation of the book's superscription (1:1-3); the interpretation of its conclusion (chap. 52); the world of the text of Jeremiah 25 MT; the positive portrait of Nebuchadrezzar; the function of repetitions and doublets.

The first point for comment is the present study's interpretation of the superscription of the book. A synchronic reading of the text has gone beyond source-critical and redactional approaches in its explanation of the function of the book's superscription.[3] Where the latter approaches have interpreted the function of 1:1-3 as the superscription to the book as it existed in some earlier form, the synchronic approach addressed the function of these verses as the superscription to the book in its final form. It showed that 1:1-3 functions with chap. 52 as an interpretive frame which sets the contents of the book in the context of the Babylonian exile. Both parts of the frame are concerned with the year 587. According to 1:1-3, that year marks the end of the prophet's ministry as described in the book. Chap. 52 begins with the events of 587, narrating the fall of Jerusalem and its aftermath. The effect of the frame is that it wraps the contents of the book in an exilic envelope. It begins and ends in exile.[4]

The effect of the frame on readers is that the exile is presented as not yet ended. The world of the text is configured as a world of exile. When the world of the text is engaged by readers, it offers them the possibility of re-interpreting their situation as one of exile.[5] Given that the book of Jeremiah is a text which reached its final form only in the post-exilic period, the effect of its frame on the reading community is significant. Although at the levels of the geographical and the historical, the return from exile in Babylon has long since happened, it is represented within the text as still continuing. The world of the text of Jeremiah MT then offers the post-exilic community the possibility of interpreting their situation in the light of the exile. As will be seen later in this chap-

---

[3] For the fuller treatment, see above, 24-40.

[4] See above, 23-25.

[5] For the role of the reader in appropriating the meaning of a text, see above, 15-16.

ter, this understanding is consistent with the post-exilic idea of an unended exile.[6]

The second point about a synchronic reading of the book is its interpretation of Jeremiah 25 MT.[7] Rather than privilege the LXX as an earlier or better text, the present study has read the MT as a literary text in its own right. A synchronic reading of Jeremiah 25 MT brings to light the chapter's particular understanding of the figure of Babylon not found in Jeremiah 25 LXX.

Within the chapter there is a shift in the representation of Babylon. At the beginning of the chapter (25:1 MT) it has the characteristics of a historical figure. Its king is named and a particular year of his reign is cited. However by 25:26 Babylon appears as a figure of mystery and is referred to by the cipher שׁשׁך ("Sheshach"). It is neither confined to a particular historical context nor identified with a particular geographical region.

The shift in the representation of Babylon is the result of the disintegration of historical and geographical parameters in the chapter, a feature of the MT not found in the LXX. In Jeremiah 25 MT the chronological distance between the year 605 and the occasion of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 is collapsed. The events of 587 are also made contemporaneous with the time of the reader by means of the expression היום הזה ("this day" – 25:18 MT). Another effect of the chapter's collapse of the chronological framework is that the expression בשׁנה הרבעית ליהויקים ("the fourth year of King Jehoiakim" – 25:1 MT) becomes a metaphor for Yhwh's judgment, as it is in 36:1 MT and 45:1 MT. For readers of Jeremiah 25 MT the representation of Jerusalem as still in ruins is another expression of the idea that the exile is not yet ended.

Geographical parameters are collapsed in vv. 15-25 MT, which lists the nations who are to drink the cup of Yhwh's judgment. The list begins in v. 18 with Egypt and other identifiable geographical entities and continues in the same vein until v. 23, at which point it starts to refer to generic groups of people whose identities are not always clear. After every nation on earth has submitted, the king of Babylon drinks the cup (v. 26).

The effect of the sequence in the list is to portray Babylon as a

---

[6] See above, 213-215.
[7] For the full treatment of what follows, see 90-126.

figure which is outside the realm of the historical and geograph-
ical. Its designation in v. 26 as שֵׁשַׁך ("Sheshach") and not as the
usual בבל ("Babylon") gives it an unknown and timeless quality.
The list begins with Egypt, the nation associated with the begin-
nings of Israel as an independent nation, and ends with Baby-
lon, the nation associated with the end of Israel as an indepen-
dent nation. The breakdown of coherent chronological and
geographical frames of reference is the condition for the emer-
gence of the metaphorical שֵׁשַׁך. Such a distinctive representation
of Babylon in Jeremiah 25 MT is founded on a synchronic read-
ing which takes seriously the final form of the chapter as a liter-
ary entity.

Another insight which emerges when the MT is read as a text
in its own right, is the significance of the figure of Nebuchadrez-
zar. The MT's representation of a metaphorical association, or
at least a close association between Yhwh and Nebuchadrezzar is
not found in the LXX. The designation of Nebuchadrezzar as עבדי
("my servant") in 25:9 MT and 27:6 MT is absent from the equiv-
alent passages in the LXX (25:9 LXX; 34:6 LXX). The MT's met-
aphorical association of the Babylonian king with the great fig-
ures of Judah's history such as David and Joshua is missing from
the LXX. Although the Babylonian king is given the same high
standing in both 27:5-8 MT and 34:5-8 LXX, the metaphorical
identification of Nebuchadrezzar with the eponymous human
ancestor in Genesis 2 is more developed in the MT than in the
LXX.

Similarly in 21:1-10 MT the figure of Nebuchadrezzar has an
importance which it lacks in 21:1-10 LXX, where the Babylonian
king remains unnamed. The MT represents Nebuchadrezzar as
aligned with Yhwh and as a counter-figure to Zedekiah, an un-
derstanding consistent with the negative or ambiguous judgments
on the Judean kings (with the exception of Josiah) in 21:11–23:8.

A further contribution of a synchronic reading is its understand-
ing of the function of doublets and repetitions in the book, es-
pecially those which appear in both the oracles against Judah
(chaps. 4–6) and the oracles against Babylon (chaps. 50–51 MT).
Where source-critical and redactional approaches try to establish
the literary priority of one over the other, the synchronic read-
ing of the present study has focussed on the function of these
repetitions in the construction of the text. The use of material

from chaps. 4–6 in chaps. 50–51 helps create a link between the figures of Babylon and Judah. Both are thereby represented as being threatened with the same punishment by the same God for the same offence.

The present study's synchronic reading has generated a number of important insights into Jeremiah MT. It represents the exile as unended, and thereby offers its readers a redescription of their world as a world of exile. Such a representation fits well with the post-exilic community and its belief in an unended exile. The synchronic reading brings to light the significant and distinctive representation of Babylon in Jeremiah 25 MT, as it does with the MT's portrait of Nebuchadrezzar. It also offers an interpretation of the frequent doublets in the text that goes beyond that of source-critical and redactional approaches to the book.

1.2. *A Synchronic Reading: The Role of Metaphor*

A particular feature of the synchronic approach of the present study is its recognition of the role of metaphor as a hermeneutical key, which opens up a different range of interpretive possibilities in the book from the more long-standing source-critical and redactional approaches. A recognition of the metaphorical dimension of the text also leads to a different approach in the interpretation of the discrepancies and contradictions in the book. As a result new understandings and insights emerge.[8]

There are a number of instances of new interpretations which emerged in the present study. The central role of metaphor in the interpretation of the book was reflected in the superscription. The very first verses of the book are metaphorical, and it is only as metaphor that the contents of the book can be understood as דברי ירמיהו ("the words of Jeremiah" – 1:1).[9]

Metaphor was also an important key in the interpretation of the framing effect of vv. 1-3 and chap. 52 in enabling the perception that the exile was not yet ended. The unended exile is a metaphor which provides a way for the community to interpret its present situation. Although back in the land, they can contin-

---

[8] For metaphor as producing new meanings or "semantic innovation", see Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 95-100. Also, see above, 13-16.

[9] For this, see above, 24-34.

ue to represent their situation as one of exile, and although Baby-
lonian domination is a thing of the past, they can still conceive
of themselves as living under Babylonian control.

The present study has drawn attention to the metaphorical
dimension of chronological information in the book. This was
important not only in explaining how 1:1-3 functions as the book's
superscription but also in the interpretation of Jeremiah 25 MT.[10]
The collapse of coherent chronological and geographical frame-
works in the chapter was seen to have a positive hermeneutical
function. The text represented the world metaphorically in which
the events of the year 605, the destruction of Jerusalem and the
time of the reader were all brought together in one moment of
time. It portrayed a world standing between two phases of Yhwh's
judgment: the first was the judgment on Judah in which Jerusa-
lem was reduced to ruins (v. 18 MT); the second the judgment
on the whole world which was yet to be realised (vv. 15-29; 30-38
MT).

The recognition of the role of metaphor is also central to how
the present study has interpreted the figure of Babylon, and how
it has dealt with the tensions and contradictions in its represen-
tation. Inherent in metaphor is the tension between identity and
difference. X *is* Y, and at the same time X *is not* Y. The tensions
and discrepancies in the text are not thereby eliminated, but their
positive hermeneutical function is recognised.[11] This is particu-
larly necessary in Jeremiah research. Given the dominance of source
critical and redactional approaches in modern Jeremiah studies,
the tensions within the text have been usually explained as orig-
inating from the world behind the text. While such an approach
can account for the tensions in terms of the compositional his-
tory of the text, it cannot address the role of these contradictions
in the construction of the world of the text.

The present study has identified two sets of metaphorical rela-
tionships which involve Babylon. One is that between Babylon and
Judah, the other between Babylon and Yhwh. Each set contains
within it the tension, characteristic of metaphor, between iden-
tity and difference. The first set for comment is the relationship

---

[10] See above, 94-102.
[11] On the role of the copula in the emergence of metaphor, see above,
14-16.

between Babylon and Judah found particularly in chaps. 27 MT;
29 MT and 50–51 MT.

In Jeremiah 27 MT the relationship of identity is found in vv.
4-6 in which the foreign conqueror is represented with imagery
and language which echo Judah's great traditions of creation,
exodus, the patriarchal promise of the land, and the faithful Da-
vidic kings (vv. 4-6). The portrait of Nebuchadrezzar is such that
he is more like one of the great Judean kings than a foreign con-
queror.[12] The relationship of difference is constructed by refer-
ences to Babylon as a conqueror whose period of dominance is
determined by Yhwh (v. 7) and as a place of exile from which
there will ultimately be a return (v. 22).

In Jeremiah 29 MT Babylon is metaphorically identified with
Judah and Jerusalem. The effect of the language and imagery used
in 29:4-7 is to represent Babylon as a place just like Judah. It is in
Babylon that the Deuteronomic blessings associated with life in
the land are to be realised. It is the place of settlement which
brings the patriarchal wanderings to an end, and the place in which
the promise of descendants for the patriarchs will come to pass.
Babylon is also the city of שלום ("peace", "welfare"), while Jerusa-
lem will become a city of death and destruction (vv. 16-20 MT).[13]

At the same time in 29:10-14 MT Babylon is differentiated from
Judah. It is a metaphor for banishment from the land. Exile in
Babylon is a term which embraces not just those taken by Neb-
uchadrezzar after 597 but also those scattered in diaspora. Baby-
lon becomes the place from which they will return.

In Jeremiah 50–51 MT there is also the metaphoric tension
between identity and difference. In these chapters Babylon is rep-
resented primarily as the alien other, the enemy of both Yhwh
and Judah, whose defeat is both predicted and celebrated. How-
ever Babylon is also represented as a figure like Judah. Both are
portrayed as sinful and guilty. The punishment of both originates
from the same God, takes the same form, and is expressed in the
same imagery and language. Even in the most anti-Babylon part
of the whole book, Babylon is not completely an alien figure.[14]

The metaphorical relationship between Babylon and Yhwh also

---

[12] See above 105-112.
[13] See above, 95-96.
[14] See above, 175-183.

contains the tension between identity and difference. The aspect
of identity is found especially in 21:1-10 MT and 25:9 MT. In 21:1-
10 MT Nebuchadrezzar is metaphorically identified with Yhwh in
the attack on Jerusalem. Both he and Yhwh share a common an-
tipathy towards Jerusalem: neither will show it pity, compassion
or mercy.[15] In 25:9 MT the representation of Nebuchadrezzar as
conducting Yhwh's war of extermination together with his desig-
nation as עבדי ("my servant") metaphorically identifies him with
Joshua, who was עבד יהוה ("the servant of the LORD" – Josh 24:29)
and who also conducted wars of extermination against Yhwh's
enemies. At the same time in 25:12-14 MT, the Babylonian king
is represented as the enemy of Yhwh who is to be punished.[16]

In a synchronic approach the recognition of the tension in-
herent in metaphor between identity and difference opens up a
different range of interpretative possibilities from those available
in source-critical or redactional approaches. The latter approaches
can effectively short-circuit an exploration of discrepancies and
tensions by an appeal to the world behind the text which lead to
deletions or emendations of difficult words or expressions. The
following deletions can be cited by way of example: all of 8:19b
and the messenger formula from 9:16 (9:17 NRSV); היא השנה
הראשנית לנבוכדראצר מלך בבל ("that was the first year of King Nebu-
chadrezzar of Babylon") from 25:1 MT; עבדי ("my servant") from
25:9 MT and 27:7 MT; כיום הזה ("as of this day") from 25:18 MT;
the omission of names of nations in 25:18-26 MT in order to dis-
cern a particular geographical order. The present study has shown
that all these words or expressions make a contribution to the
meaning of the texts in which they occur.[17]

Attributing the discrepancies and contradictions either to dif-
ferent sources or different stages in the book's redaction effec-
tively removes the tension from the text. A synchronic approach
which recognises the inherent tension in metaphor is able to
explore the positive hermeneutical function of discrepancies and
tensions and generate new insights into the text.

---

[15] For 21:1-10, see above, 75-84.

[16] See above, 112-116.

[17] The deletion of 8:19b is proposed by McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:193; עבדי from
25:9 MT is proposed by Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 662; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 160. The
deletion of כיום הזה is advocated by McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:663. The emendation of
עבדי in 27:6 MT is advocated by Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 112.

Names of nations are deleted from 25:18-26 MT by Jones, *Jeremiah*, 331; Ru-
dolph, *Jeremia*, 164-166.

A recent essay by Carroll on synchronic and diachronic approaches to the book of Jeremiah is relevant here.[18] He takes up interpretation of the figure of Nebuchadrezzar, who in 25:9 MT and 27:6 MT is designated as עבדי ("my servant"), and in 51:34 as תנין ("monster"). These designations appear mutually exclusive and contradictory: Nebuchadrezzar is both the servant and enemy of Yhwh. Carroll accounts for the two designations by identifying them with two different communities. The designation of Nebuchadrezzar as עבדי reflects the symbolic world of the diaspora communities who must accept and submit to the rule of the emperor, while the designation תנין reflects the world of Palestinian communities who had experienced first hand defeat and subjugation.[19]

While acknowledging the diachronic as his preferred approach, Carroll does explore how a synchronic approach might deal with the issue, but he has reservations about the usefulness of a synchronic reading of the text. He argues that it may be possible to read the text synchronically on the basis of what he calls "the equation servant = dragon".[20] However he then goes on to reject such a possibility:[21]

> It might be possible to develop an argument for the equation servant = dragon, but it is not one made by the book of Jeremiah...The equation Jerusalem = Sodom is almost a commonplace of the prophetic books (see also Rev. 11:8), so why not Babylon as servant/ dragon? The biblical writers never make the equation Jerusalem = Babylon, so it is less easy to argue for an entity being both good and bad except as alternating possibilities.

In the light of the present study's approach to the text in general, and its interpretation of Jeremiah 29 MT in particular, Carroll's argument requires further comment.

First, it has to be recognised that two different suppositions are at work here. He introduces the question of authorial intention into the discussion, whereas the present study's focus is on the meaning of the text rather than on the meaning intended by an author.[22]

---

[18] As Carroll does in his recent essay "Synchronic Deconstructions," 39-51.

[19] *Ibid.*, 47-48.

[20] *Ibid.*, 49.

[21] *Ibid.*, 49.

[22] Of the biblical authors, Carroll writes: "I do not want to make the writers of the bible appear to be brilliant, post modernist authors with a taste for irony, paradox and deconstruction" (*ibid.*, 49). He further says "in my opinion it is

Second, allowing for the differences in these suppositions, it still must be said that a metaphorical approach does produce the kind of equation Carroll requires for a synchronic reading. The present study's interpretation of 29:5-7 shows how an identity of Jerusalem with Babylon emerges.[23] In Carroll's terms, Jerusalem *does equal* Babylon. A recognition of the role of metaphor opens up a different interpretive possibility.

A final contribution of metaphor to the reading of the book is found in chaps. 2–20, in which the figure of Babylon functions as an organising metaphor. Within a text there are metaphors which are more central or fundamental to the structure of the text, and contribute to its order, shape or form. Such a metaphor has been referred to earlier in this study as an organising metaphor.[24]

In chaps. 2–20 disparate metaphors for Yhwh's judgment against Judah are subsumed under the figure of Babylon. Within these chapters the threatened judgment against Judah is represented by a number of different metaphors, which can be grouped under three headings: a) judgment represented as invasion and captivity; b) judgment as banishment from the land; c) judgment as death by the sword. In Jer 20:1-6 Babylon is portrayed as Judah's invader and captor; as the place to which the people of Judah, represented by Pashhur, will be banished; and as the one whose sword will bring death to the inhabitants of the land.

For the reader of 20:1-6 the disparate metaphors for judgment which occur in chaps. 2–20 in no clear order or pattern, now become associated with the figure of Babylon. 20:1-6 is like a lens

---

unlikely that the writer(s) of Jeremiah will have made the equation Nebuchadrezzar YHWH's servant is also the dragon" (*ibid.*, 49-50).

Another point of difference in suppositions is the relevance of the LXX. Carroll appeals to the LXX to support his view. The absence in 25:9 LXX and 34:6 LXX of an equivalent to עבד is seen by him as a further indication that the biblical writers do not equate Nebuchadrezzar as Yhwh's servant with Nebuchadrezzar as the dragon. The present study's approach is to value equally both the MT and the LXX's representation. The absence in the LXX of such a designation does not mean that its presence in the MT indicates that the latter textual tradition is necessarily defective. It indicates, when dealing with the final form of the text, that we are dealing with different interpretations of the Jeremiah tradition.

[23] See above, 148-156.

[24] On this point and what follows about Babylon as an organising metaphor, see above, 62-71.

which concentrates different shafts of light into a single point of focus. That is, the disparate metaphors for judgment are concentrated in the single figure of Babylon. In this way Babylon becomes an organising metaphor for judgment in chaps. 2–20.

The function of Babylon as an organising metaphor is important for the reader of the book. The material that follows chap. 20 is quite different in character. The reading of 20:1-6 draws together the theme of Judah's judgment around the figure of Babylon before the next section of the book is negotiated. What follows in 21:1-10 is the narrative of the siege of Jerusalem in 587 by Nebuchadrezzar. What is threatened in chaps. 2–20 begins to be realised in 21:1-10.

1.3. *Summary*

The use of a synchronic approach has contributed to an understanding of Jeremiah MT in the areas of content and methodology. In the area of content, it has generated important insights such as an understanding of the exile as unended, the distinctive representation of Babylon in Jeremiah 25 MT, the significance of the MT's extremely positive portrait of Nebuchadrezzar. It also offers a different approach to the interpretation of the frequent doublets and repetitions in the text.

In the area of methodology the recognition of metaphor makes a particular contribution to the interpretation of the discrepancies and tensions in the text. Where source-critical and redactional approaches have taken these as starting points in the analysis of the book's compositional history, the present study has utilised the tension in metaphor between identity and difference to explore other interpretive possibilities within a synchronic reading of the text.

2. *The Representation of Babylon*

Although the representation of Babylon has already been referred to in the previous section, it is helpful at this point to gather together in a more systematic way the present study's conclusions on this point. The conclusions can be summarised under the following headings: i) the distinctively Jeremian representation of

Babylon; ii) a more conventional understanding of Babylon; iii) the use of masculine and feminine imagery in representing Babylon; iv) Babylon as still dominant.

The first point for comment is the distinctively Jeremian representation of Babylon, the most significant feature of which is its extremely positive character. For example, the designation of Nebuchadrezzar as עבדי ("my servant" – 25:9 MT; but especially 27:6 MT) and his role in conducting Yhwh's war of extermination suggests an understanding of the Babylonian king that goes beyond his role as Yhwh's vassal or instrument in the destruction of Judah. Rather, in 25:9 MT Nebuchadrezzar is associated with the figure of Joshua, who was עבד יהוה ("the servant of the LORD" – Josh 24:29) and who led Israel in Yhwh's war of extermination.[25] The war of the Babylonian king is as much the war of Yhwh as was that of Joshua when he led Israel in their conquest of the land.

In 27:4-8 MT Nebuchadrezzar resembles a Judean king of high standing more than he does a foreign conqueror. The God of Judah gives him a position of pre-eminent authority over the created world similar to that given to the human ancestor in Genesis 2 (Jer 27:5 MT). Like the great Judean kings, the God of Judah judges him to be ישר בעיני ("pleasing in my eyes" – v. 5), designates him as עבדי, and makes the foreign conqueror the recipient of the patriarchal promise of the land. The Babylonian king is more a Judean than a foreigner.

The standing of Nebuchadrezzar is further enhanced by the negative judgments made on the Judean kings in chaps. 21–24.[26] The kings of Babylon and Judah are central figures in these chapters, and Nebuchadrezzar and Zedekiah portrayed in a relationship of opposition to each other. In 21:1-10, which is set during the siege of Jerusalem in 587, it is initially suggested that Nebuchadrezzar is a parallel figure to Sennacherib, and Zedekiah to Hezekiah (v. 1-2 MT). However as the narrative unfolds, Nebuchadrezzar is metaphorically identified with Yhwh (vv. 3-7 MT). A relationship of opposition exists not just between Nebuchadrezzar and Zedekiah, but also between Yhwh and Zedekiah. Within 21:11–23:8, which are a series of oracles directed against the Judean

---

[25] For further on this, see above, 109-110.
[26] For this, see above, 83-85.

kings, a favourable judgment in made only on Josiah (22:15-16) and the future ideal king (23:5-6).

Another striking representation of Babylon emerges from 29:4-7 MT, according to which life in Babylon is placed on a par with life in Judah. The message to the exiles is that Babylon is home![27] The Deuteronomistic promises associated with life in the land can be realised as much in Babylon as in Judah (v. 5 MT). Similarly Babylon is the place in which the patriarchal promises of progeny and permanent settlement can be fulfilled (v. 6 MT). It is also a place in which Yhwh is accessible to the community in worship, and it displaces Jerusalem as the city of שָׁלוֹם ("welfare, peace" – v. 7 MT).

The language of 29:4-7 MT is not that of submission, nor is the advice in these verses an expression of political pragmatism, according to which the exiles are advised to recognise the futility of any form of rebellion. While the language of submission is in Jeremiah 28 MT, it is not continued in chap. 29. Instead 29:4-7 has a profoundly different view. Babylon is not a place of oppression and death. The place of exile is a place of life and blessing. It is home!

In chaps. 50–51 MT, where Babylon is primarily represented as alien and enemy, there is also present another representation of Babylon which exists in tension with the dominant view of the chapters. This secondary representation depicts Babylon as a figure which is metaphorically identified with Judah.[28] Both are portrayed as sinful and guilty – Judah in 50:4, 20; Babylon in 50:14; 51:6.

What is particularly striking here is not the designation of Judah's sinfulness *per se*, but the context in which the designation occurs. In the oracles which proclaim punishment on Babylon for what it has done, there can also be seen the grounds for Judah's own punishment – viz., its sin. In the very proclamation of Judah's restoration, its sinful character is brought to the fore. The portrait of both figures as guilty and sinful excludes a simplistic interpretation which identifies the figure of Judah as good and that of Babylon as evil.

The undermining of a relationship of complete opposition

---

[27] See above, 145-148.
[28] For what follows, see above, 172-175.

between the figures of Judah and Babylon is also achieved by the
repetition in chaps. 50–51 MT of material found earlier in the
oracles against Judah. Units of text, phrases and key words, which
were used particularly in chaps. 4–6 to depict Yhwh's judgment,
are also found in the oracles against Babylon.[29] The effect of these
repetitions is to bring together Babylon and Judah as figures which
are both under attack by the same deity, which are both threat-
ened with the same punishment, and which both react in the same
way.

In the very part of the book in which Babylon's demise is an-
nounced and Judah is thereby vindicated, the reader is taken back
to material in which Judah itself is threatened with the same di-
saster by the same deity. Such a literary strategy undermines the
view that Judah and Babylon are essentially polar opposites – the
former the quintessential enemy of Yhwh, the latter the innocent
victim about to be vindicated.

The second point for comment about the figure of Babylon is
its conventional representations in Jeremiah MT. The term "con-
ventional" is used to refer to the representations of Babylon in
Jeremiah MT which broadly conform with those found in the books
of Isaiah and Ezekiel. Babylon is the agent of Yhwh's judgment,
the place of Judah's exile, and the evil oppressor and enemy of
Yhwh.

While these interpretations of Babylon have been generally
recognised in Jeremiah research, the present study has contrib-
uted some further insights especially into the representation of
Babylon as the agent of Yhwh's judgment, which is expressed in
the book of Jeremiah MT in a particularly distinctive way.

Babylon is not represented simply as an instrument of Yhwh,
as is the king of Assyria. Where the latter is described as שֵׁבֶט אַפִּי
("the rod of my anger" – Isa 10:5), the former is עַבְדִּי ("my ser-
vant" – 25:9 MT), a designation which signifies a relationship far
more intimate than the instrumental.[30] In 21:1-10 Nebuchadrez-
zar is also represented as more closely associated with Yhwh than
just as an instrument. He not only fights with Yhwh but the two
figures share a common antipathy towards Judah which is char-
acterised by the refusal of mercy or compassion.[31]

---

[29] For the list of such units, phrases and key words, see above, 174-180.
[30] See above, 106-110.
[31] See above, 72-82.

Similarly in the representation of Babylon as the place of Judah's exile, the present study has shown that in 20:1-6 exile to Babylon is not just a metaphor for being landless, but also represents the repudiation of the promise to the patriarchs that Judah would enjoy secure possession of the land.[32]

The representation of Babylon as a place of exile also has another significance which the present study has taken up. In Jeremiah 29 MT Babylon is both the place of Judah's exile, and the place from which people will return to again take possession of the land. Again, while this is a commonly recognised understanding, the present study has shown how both the figure of Babylon and the idea of the return also contain a metaphorical dimension. The Babylon of Jeremiah 29 MT is not just the place to which Nebuchadrezzar deported sections of Judah's population after 597. To be in Babylon is a phrase that describes the situation not just of the exiles deported by Nebuchadrezzar after 597, but of those who live in unnamed lands as part of the diaspora. Babylon is a metaphor and stands for the place from which all those banished from the land will return.[33]

The conventional understanding of Babylon as the evil oppressor and enemy of Yhwh is most clearly found in chaps. 25 MT and 50–51 MT. Although its portrait changes in the course of the chapter, Babylon is also represented in conventional terms in Jeremiah 25 MT.[34] The Babylonians, represented by the figure of their king, are the agents of Yhwh's judgment against Judah (v. 9 MT). They are to dominate seventy years, after which they too will be subjugated by unnamed conquerors (vv. 12-14 MT). While the Babylon of vv. 1-14 MT resembles the Babylon of the late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE, a different understanding emerges in vv. 15-30 MT. Here Babylon appears as a figure of mystery and referred to by the cipher שׁשׁך ("Sheshach" – v. 26). It is neither confined to a particular historical context nor identified with a particular geographical region.

Within Jeremiah 25 MT one can see the development from a Babylon which is a figure from history to a Babylon which shows some of the characteristics of the archetypal enemy of Yhwh. The

---

[32] See above, 58-62.
[33] See above, 156-158.
[34] For what follows, see above, 110-113.

representation of Babylon as שֵׁשַׁךְ, the figure of mystery whose
identity transcends historical and geographical boundaries of the
Syro-Palestinian world of the late seventh and early sixth centu-
ries, makes possible the identification of Babylon with foreign op-
pressors of later periods in history. The Ptolomies may well be
the Babylon of the mid-second century BCE, just as Rome could
be so understood by Christian communities in the first century
CE (e.g., as in Revelation 18).[35]

The conventional understanding of Babylon as the enemy is
found in Jeremiah 50–51 MT, the climax of the oracles against
the nations (chaps. 46–51 MT). Here Babylon is predominantly
represented as the enemy of Yhwh.[36] The Babylonian king is an
arrogant oppressor like the Pharaoh of the Exodus story (50:29-
34). He is a lion who like the Assyrian king devours Israel (50:11).
He crushes and devours Judah like a monster (51:34), and in this
is represented like the Babylonian deity Bel (51:44). Babylon is
like the tower of Babel, fortified in vain against the attack of Yhwh.
Babylon is a place in which deities other than Yhwh are worshipped.
It is the alien other, opposed to both Yhwh and Judah.

The third aspect for comment about the representation of
Babylon is the use of masculine and feminine imagery. In pas-
sages in which Babylon is dominant, it is represented predomi-
nantly by the figure of its king or by other masculine images. In
passages which refer to Babylon's demise, it is represented pre-
dominantly by feminine imagery. In 21:1-10 MT Babylon is rep-
resented by its king and soldiers who, together with Yhwh, lay siege
to the city of Jerusalem. In 27:4-15 MT it is again the king who
represents a Babylon that is dominant. In Jeremiah 28 MT the
yoke of the king of Babylon and submission to him are central
ideas. It is in the context of Babylonian supremacy that Nebucha-
drezzar is represented as עַבְדִּי ("my servant").

In chaps. 50–51 MT Babylon is represented in imagery that is
predominantly feminine. It is a land (50:16, 26-27) and a mother
(50:12) and as such is the source of life for its inhabitants. It is a
city whose walls give protection to its people (50:15; 51:12, 44,
58). It is also a daughter, בַּת־בָּבֶל ("Daughter of Babylon" – 50:42),
an expression which personifies the city as a goddess and spouse

---

[35] On the identification of the Ptolomies with שֵׁשַׁךְ, see Rietzschel, *Urrolle*, 87.
[36] For what follows, see above, 166-174.

of the patronal deity.[37] Where masculine imagery is found in chaps. 50–51 MT it refers to Babylon as dominant. Masculine imagery for Babylon in these chapters includes that of a lion (50:17-20), another Pharaoh (vv. 31-34), a dragon (51:34), a figure like the tower of Babel in Genesis 11 (Jer 51:53), a war club (51:20).

The representation of Babylon in feminine imagery touches on difficult hermeneutical issues. While one effect of the use of feminine imagery for Babylon is to intensify the nature of Yhwh's destruction, disturbing questions emerge about the relationship between a deity represented as masculine and a part of that deity's creation represented as feminine. The personification of Babylon in 51:33 raises the same question. In 51:33 Babylon, personified as בת־בבל ("daughter of Babylon"), is portrayed as a threshing floor which will be trampled on. The combination of the imagery of stomping and threshing with the personification of Babylon suggests physical violence and possibly sexual humiliation.[38]

The use of masculine and feminine imagery and its significance in representing Babylon points to the need for a more extensive study of this kind of imagery in the book, particularly in the chaps. 2–10 which deal with the judgment against Jerusalem and Judah. Such research needs to deal with not just the use of the imagery in Jeremiah MT, but also with its significance in the contemporary debate about the interpretation of patriarchal language in the bible.

The fourth aspect of the representation of Babylon for comment is the understanding of Babylonian dominance as not yet ended. The construction of time in Jeremiah 25 MT illustrates this point clearly. In v. 18 MT, Jerusalem and the cities of Judah are said to be in ruins כיום הזה ("as they are today"). One function of the expression כיום הזה is to make the events to which it refers contemporaneous with the time of the reader.[39] It provides

---

[37] See above, 166-170.

[38] As noted by Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 841. For the fuller discussion of masculine and feminine imagery in Jeremiah 50–51 MT, see above, 167-172.

[39] The strategy is frequently used in the book of Deuteronomy, which makes every generation of Israel contemporaneous with the people who listen to Moses on the plains of Moab before they enter the land (e.g., Deut 4:38; 5:3, 24; 8:1; 9:3; 11:2; 30:2). The past, present and future all come together in this moment at Moab. For a fuller treatment, see J. G. McConville and J. G. Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy* (JSOTSup 179; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994) 42; von Rad, "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 28-30.

a point of intersection between the world of the text and the world of the reader.

The references to Babylon's seventy year domination in 25:12 MT and 29:10 MT, as does the reference to three generations of Babylonian rule (27:7 MT), indicate that Babylon's period of supremacy is limited but as yet unended.

The dominance of Babylon is also clearly indicated in the book's conclusion. While the release of Jehoiachin from prison may be a sign of hope for Judah's future, the action is still the initiative of the Babylonian king (52:31-34). The hope of a future, symbolised by Jehoiachin's release, is intertwined with the reality of Babylon's domination and Judah's exile.[40]

While the demise of Babylon is predicted, it is counterbalanced by the present and on-going reality of exile in a way peculiar to the book of Jeremiah. The tension between judgment and hope in 52:31-34 is reflected in the organisation of larger units of text within the MT. For example, chaps. 29–33 consist nearly exclusively of promises of restoration and return to the land, but they are embedded in a section of the book (chaps. 26–36) which concludes with references to the inevitability of divine judgment (36:27-31). Near the end of the book, the oracles against the nations (chaps. 46–51) are followed immediately by another narrative of Jerusalem's siege and occupation. The book lacks the smoother progression of the book of Ezekiel, which moves from judgment against Judah (Ezekiel 1–24) to oracles against the nations (chaps. 25–32) and then to promises of restoration and return to the land (chaps. 33–39; 40–48).

The gathering of material on the representations of Babylon provides a platform for the final part of the present study's conclusion.

3. The Function of the Book of Jeremiah MT

The interpretation of Babylon in the present study has consequences for our understanding of the book of Jeremiah MT. Two points about the function of Jeremiah MT emerge from the present study. The first is the book's contribution to a theology of the unended

---

[40] On this, see above, 29-31.

exile. The second is its de-centred view of Judah and its place in the world.

Because Jeremiah MT in its final form is the product of the post-exilic community, it is necessary to first take up two aspects of post-exilic thought which are relevant to the present discussion. Before these can be taken up, two facets of the post-exilic period need to be introduced into the discussion. The first is the role of pre-exilic prophets in the post-exilic period. Within this period the message of the pre-exilic prophets was used to interpret the community's present experience.[41] A clear example is the post-exilic interest in the Jeremian prediction that Judah would be subjugated for seventy years (25:12 MT; 29:10 MT). The prediction is referred to in several texts, the most significant of which for our purposes is Dan 9:2:[42]

I, Daniel, perceived in the	אני דניאל בינתי בספרים
books the number of years	מספר השנים
that, according to the word of	אשר היה דבר־יהוה
the LORD to the prophet	אל־ירמיה הנביא
Jeremiah, must be fulfilled	למלאות
for the devastation of	לחרבות ירושלם
Jerusalem, namely, seventy	שבעים שנה:
years.	
(Dan 9:2)	

Dan 9:2 not only reflects the post-exilic community's belief that the prophetic tradition was relevant for their own situation, but it also indicates that by the Maccabean time the Jeremian tradition had begun to take written form. Daniel encounters the Jeremian tradition as a written text, capable of reinterpretation. It projected a world of exile, which allowed him to understand the community's situation in his time as one of an exile whose duration would be שבעים שבעים ("seventy weeks") or seventy sabbath cycles (9:24), the equivalent of four hundred and ninety years.[43]

---

[41] For an extensive treatment of the post-exilic community's interpretation of prophecy, see John Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986) esp. 179-202, 214-234; also Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 458-499.

[42] The other instances are Zech 1:12; 7:5; 2 Chron 36:20-21; Ezra 1:1. For a treatment of the reinterpretation of the prediction, see Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 239-244; Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 480-485; Christian Wolff, *Jeremia im Frühjudentum und Urchristentum*, 100-116.

[43] According to Lev 25:1-7 a sabbath cycle is seven years, and so the שבעים שבעים of Dan 9:24 is interpreted as four hundred and ninety years. For this see

The fictive settings found in the book of Daniel show that the exile now has a metaphorical significance. Although composed in the Maccabean period, the book is set in Babylon during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (1:1), and Daniel is portrayed as a Judean exile in Babylon.[44]

The second point of background is the emergence in the post-exilic period of a belief that the exile was not yet ended.[45] At first, in the early post-exilic period, it was believed that the exile had ended with the establishment of the Persian empire. The view is reflected in 2 Chron 36:20-21, which linked the rise of Cyrus to the seventy years predictions of Jeremiah. However as Daniel 9 indicates, by the Maccabean period the prediction was seen to be as yet unfulfilled.

The book of Jeremiah MT shares the belief in an unended exile, but also adds its own particular contributions to this idea. Its representation of a delicate balance and tension between the present judgment and the future hope is one contribution. The tension and balance emerge from the book's conclusion, order and overall structure.[46] Its order is clearly different from other prophetic books, which were redacted in such a way that predictions of judgment and destruction were concluded by promises of hope and restoration.[47] Such an arrangement can be seen not only in the book of Ezekiel, but also in the arrangement of the collection of the twelve prophets which shows a movement from sin to punishment to restoration.[48] However the framing of the contents of Jeremi-

---

John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 352-353; Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 482-483; Norman Porteous, *Daniel* (OTL; London: SCM, 1979) 139-140.

[44] The significance of this setting is noted particularly by Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 482. For the dates and stages of the books's composition, see Collins, *Daniel*, 47-50, 60-61.

[45] For a concise summary of the post-exilic belief in the ended exile, see N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Christian Origins and The Question of God, vol. 1; London: SPCK, 1992) 268-272. For the exile in second temple Judaism, see also Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 237-247; Michael A. Knibb, "The Exile in the Literature of the Intertestamental Period," *HeyJ* 17 (1976) 253-272.

[46] For this, see above, 28-34.

[47] As noted by Clements, "Patterns in the Prophetic Canon," 47-55; also in his "Prophecy as Literature: A Re-Appraisal," *The Hermeneutical Quest: Essays in Honor of James Luther Mays on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. Donald G. Miller; Allison Park, Penn: Pickwick, 1986) 69.

[48] So, Paul R. House, *The Unity of the Twelve* (JSOTSup 97; Sheffield: Almond, 1990) 160-162. The use of prophetic texts in the post-exilic synagogue indicates

ah MT by 1:1-3 and chap. 52 helps construct the world of the text as one of an unended exile.

Another contribution of Jeremiah MT to the idea of an un-ended exile stems from its representation of a Babylonian domi-nance that still continues. It can be seen in the book's extremely positive portrait of Nebuchadrezzar and in the representation of Babylon both in Jeremiah 25 MT and chaps. 50–51 MT.

In the absence of the monarchy in post-exilic Judah the posi-tive representation of Nebuchadrezzar is extremely significant, because he is portrayed in such a way in Jeremiah 27 MT that he is indistinguishable from a Judean king. The positive portrait of Nebuchadrezzar contributes to a legitimation of post-exilic Judah's situation of continued subjugation to the great empires of the day. Such a representation legitimates not just the historical event of Judah's devastation and exile in 587, but also allows it to in-terpret its own situation as a subjugated province of foreign em-pires as an extension of the period of Babylonian occupation.

The positive representation of Nebuchadrezzar becomes even more intriguing if the LXX more closely reflects an earlier He-brew text of Jeremiah than does the MT. If then we accept that the epithet עבדי ("my servant") in 25:9 and 27:6 together with the introduction of the Babylonian king's name in 21:2; 25:9; 27:20; 29:1 and the additions to 27:5 are peculiar to the MT and were not found in the earlier Hebrew text, the question about Neb-uchadrezzar's significance becomes even more fascinating. The further we move away both from the original text of Jeremiah and the time of the exile, the more interest there is in the figure of the Babylonian conqueror of sixth century Judah. Unfortunately further investigation of this question depends on the emergence of a greater consensus about the development of the two textual traditions of the book.[49]

---

a similar interest in the prophetic tradition as a source of hope and comfort (Barton, *Oracles of God*, 241). As Knibb shows, there is also a clearly discernible sequence of "Sin-Exile-Return" in intertestamental literature ("The Exile in In-tertestamental Literature," 264-268).

[49] In the post-exilic community the figure of Nebuchadrezzar is a figure of interest especially in the book of Daniel, where he is portrayed as a believer in Yhwh (Dan 4:31-34 [4:34-37 NRSV]). While Jeremiah MT does not go that far, he is still portrayed in very favourable terms and cannot be seen as represent-ing a tyrannical oppressor such as Antiochus Epiphanes IV. For the view that the figure of Nebuchadrezzar in the book of Daniel is based on traditions which

A further contribution of Jeremiah MT to the understanding of the unended exile is in Jeremiah 25 MT. In v. 18 MT the devastations of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah are seen as still continuing. The seventy year prediction of Babylonian domination is of course especially relevant in the light of Dan 9:2. Another significant feature is the designation of Babylon as שֵׁשַׁך in v. 26 MT. The cipher effectively hides the identity of שֵׁשַׁך so that the designation can be applied to any oppressor who is then identified as an enemy of Yhwh. This understanding of Babylon has a less benign and more sinister aspect to it than that in Jeremiah 27 MT.

The tension in the oracles against Babylon (chaps. 50–51 MT), between the promise of Babylon's demise and the reality of its present power, also contributes to the idea of an on-going exile, and like Jeremiah 25 MT reflect a negative understanding of Babylon.

Besides its contribution to the post-exilic idea of the unended exile, Jeremiah MT projects a de-centred view of Judah's place in the world, in which there is no emphasis on the temple, Jerusalem or the land of Judah as the centre of the cosmos, and in which there is no understanding of Judah as a people whom Yhwh has separated and claimed as unique. The view is founded on the metaphorical identification between the figure of Babylon and Judah expressed in texts such as 25:12-14 MT; 27:4-8 MT; 29:4-7 MT; 50:4-20 MT.

There are several points for consideration here. In general it can be said that the effect of the identification of Babylon with Judah is to break down the view that they are figures whose relationship with each other is one of opposition and hostility. At times in Jeremiah MT one cannot be clearly differentiated from the other. In 27:4-8 MT the language and imagery of Judah's sacred traditions is used to depict Nebuchadrezzar, the effect of which is to portray the Babylonian king and the nation he represents as having a relationship with Yhwh similar to that of Judah.[50] Election and a particular relationship with Yhwh are not exclusive to Judah.

Similarly in 29:4-7 MT, life in Babylon is presented as the equal

---

grew up around the Babylonian king Nabonidus, see Martin McNamara, "Nabonidus and the Book of Daniel," *ITQ* 37 (1970) 131-149.

[50] See above, 132-139.

of life in Judah. The blessings that come from the election of Judah
by Yhwh and the divine gift of the land can be realised by the
community in exile. Babylon is home. This is an extraordinary
view, the more so in the light of Isa 65:21-23 and its vision of what
life would be like for the community after their return from ex-
ile. Where Jer 29:4-7 MT associates the Deuteronomic blessings
of houses, marriage, children and vineyards with life in Babylon,
in Isa 65:21-23 they are associated with the wonderful vision of
life in Judah after the restoration. While the two visions share a
common understanding of what characterises life in the home-
land, they differ precisely on where that homeland is. For Isa 65:21-
23 that homeland is Judah; for Jer 29:4-7 MT it is Babylon – wher-
ever Babylon may be.

Even texts which predict the demise of Babylon contribute to
a de-centred view of Judah and its place in the world. In 25:12-14
MT the grounds for the punishment of Babylon are its worship
of alien deities: וכמעשׂה ידיהם לפעלם להם ושׁלמתי ("And I will repay
them according to their deeds and their hands" – v. 14 MT). While
the justice of such a punishment may be argued, v. 14 neverthe-
less links Babylon with Judah. The expression ידיהם מעשׂה ("work
of their hands") is used most frequently of Judah's idolatrous prac-
tices (1:16; 25:6, 7; 32:30; 44:8).[51] In 50:4-20 the promise of Judah's
restoration is framed by references to its own sinfulness, a quali-
ty it shares with Babylon (50:14; 51:6).

The breaking down of the relationship of opposition between
Judah and Babylon runs counter to a post-exilic view of Judah
and its relationship with the world in two ways. One is the under-
standing that life in Judah has a unique quality, and the other is
the belief held by some sections of the post-exilic community, that
Judah and its people should hold themselves separate from the
non-Jewish world.

The metaphorical identification of Babylon with Judah in
29:4-7 represents a view of the world quite different from that
found in Ezekiel 40–48. The vision of the future is mapped out
in the latter in a very structured and hierarchically organised way.[52]
At the centre of this world is the temple, whose precincts are also

---

[51] For this, see above, 111-112.

[52] The term "map" in this context is borrowed from Jonathan Z. Smith, *To
Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press,
1987) 47-73.

hierarchically structured, from the קדש הקדשים ("the most holy place" – Ezek 41:3) at its mid-point to the outer court of the people (40:17-19; 42:14). Significantly, foreigners are excluded from the area (44:9).

In another map the temple itself is situated in the centre of a section called the תרומה ("holy district" – 45:1), outside of which is the city and the rest of the land.[53] The boundaries of the land are laid out in 47:13-23 and each of the twelve tribes is allotted its inheritance (48:1-29). The division of the land here recalls that in Joshua 13:15-19.[54] The vision in 47:1-12, according to which water flows from the temple and gives life to the land, places the temple at the centre of not just the land but of the whole earth.[55]

The hierarchically organised maps in Ezekiel represent a world which has a clearly defined centre. The metaphorical identification between Babylon and Judah in Jer 29:4-7 represents a quite different view of the world. The blessings of life are not dependent on the temple in Jerusalem, but are accessible to those in exile. Yhwh is accessible also in Babylon.

The metaphorical identification of Babylon with Judah runs counter to another strand of thinking in the post-exilic period, in which Judah was conceived of as "a separated and pure people".[56] This view is reflected in Ezra 9 where Ezra orders that marriages between Jews and non-Jews are to be dissolved. The reason is given in 9:2: והתערבו זרע הקדש בעמי הארצות ("thus the holy seed has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands"). Intermarriage threatened the integrity of the separated and chosen people.[57]

The prayer of Ezra presents a view diametrically opposed to

---

[53] So, Smith, "To Take Place," 56; also Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 356.

[54] So, Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 532.

[55] For the background to 47:1-12, see Clements, *God and Temple*, 106-107; Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 370-371; Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, 80-81; Susan Niditch, "Ezekiel 40-48 in a Visionary Context," *CBQ* 48 (1986) 216-218; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 510-511.

[56] The phrase is that of Smith, *Religion of the Landless*, 148.

[57] On the ideology of separation in Ezra 9 see Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel: From the Settlement to the Hellenistic Period* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983) 241; Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 115-119; H. G. M. Williamson, "The Concept of Israel in Transition," *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives* (ed. R. E. Clements; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 141-161; Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 230-231.

the advice to the exiles in Jer 29:4-7 MT. In language which echoes
Jer 29:4-7 MT, Ezra 9:12 specifies separation from the surround-
ing peoples as the condition for possession of the land:

Therefore do not give your	ועתה
daughters to their sons,	בנותיכם
neither take their daughters	אל־תתנו לבניהם
for your sons,	ובנתיהם אל־תשאו
and never seek their peace	לבניכם ולא־תדרשו
or prosperity	שלמם
(Ezra 9:12)	

The expression בנותיכם אל־תתנו לבניהם in Ezra 9:12 is an echo in
negative form of וקחו לבניכם נשים ("take wives for your sons" – Jer
29:6 MT). There is a similar correspondence between ובניתיכם
לבניכם אל־תשאו and ואת־בנותיכם תנו לא־נשים ("give your daughters
in marriage" – Jer 29:6 MT), while ולא־תדרשו לשמם is a clear re-
versal of דרשו את־שלום העיר (Jer 29:7 MT). Although the advice in
Jer 29:4-7 MT does not address the issue of intermarriage, as does
Ezra 9, the former passage reflects a less hostile attitude to the
non-Jewish world.

The starkest contrast between Jer 29:4-7 MT and Ezra 9:12 is
surely the reversal of the command in the Jer 29:7 MT. The ex-
pression דרשו את־שלום העיר and its implication that Babylon is just
as much home as Jerusalem represents a view of the world far
different to that in Ezra 9.

The representation of Babylon in Jeremiah MT sheds light on
the function of the book in two respects. First, it shows that the
book projects an understanding of the exile as yet unended, a
view which found other expressions in the post-exilic communi-
ty. Second, it also reveals a view of the world that was markedly
different than that found in Ezekiel 40–48 and Ezra 9. Where
the Ezekiel and Ezra texts see the world as centred on the Jerus-
alem temple and the people of Judah as separate from others,
the representation of Babylon in Jeremiah MT highlights a
de-centred view of the world, characterised by an absence of bound-
aries between Judah and the world around it.

4. *Conclusion*

The book of Jeremiah has long been recognised as portraying distinctive perspectives on various aspects of the OT tradition. The book's capacity to surprise is very clearly reflected in the present study's investigation of the representation of Babylon in Jeremiah MT. Far from the stereotypical view of Babylon as the evil empire and archetypal enemy of Yhwh, its representation in Jeremiah MT is more nuanced and subtle. While in one phase of its portrayal Babylon is the archetypal foe both of Judah and Yhwh, in the other phase it is portrayed as metaphorically identified with Judah. Blake's phrase, with which the present study began, expresses the distinctive Jeremiah view very well: "Whether this is Babylon or Jerusalem, we know not".[58]

The subtlety of its representation of Babylon mirrors that of the book itself. A century of research, dominated by historical-critical approaches to the text, has produced monumental works of interpretation, and generated an intense debate about various issues. However there are still significant areas in which there is no scholarly consensus. The situation does not reflect negatively on the quality and depth of historical-critical scholarship, but can be attributed to two other factors. One is the nature of the book itself and the difficulty of imposing on it clear-cut solutions which answer every question. The other is that the trajectory of twentieth century Jeremiah studies, set largely by the work of Duhm and Mowinckel, has run its course.

It is then time for Jeremiah research to take up other approaches and investigate what interpretive possibilities they may offer. While scholars using newer approaches have quite different presuppositions and ask different questions of the text, they still are indebted to the contribution of those who preceded them. The present study has used an approach and proposed an interpretation of one aspect of the book which differs from the mainstream of twentieth century Jeremiah research. It nevertheless recognises its debt to those whose labour and research has provided the springboard and foundation for Jeremiah research into the next century.

---

[58] See above, 1.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works on the Book of Jeremiah

Ackroyd, P. R. "Jeremiah X. 1-16." *JTS* NS 14 (1963): 385-90.
——— Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought in the Sixth Century BC. London: SCM, 1968.
——— *Studies in the Religious Tradition of the Old Testament.* London: SCM, 1987.
Aitken, Kenneth T. "The Oracles Against Babylon in Jeremiah 50-51: Structures and Perspectives." *Tyndale Bulletin* 35 (1984): 25-63.
Bach, Robert. "Bauen und Pflanzen." In *Studien zur Theologie der alttestamentlichen Überlieferungen*, eds. Rolf Rendtorff and Klaus Koch. Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1961, 7-32.
Bardtke, Hans. "Jeremia der Fremdvölkerprophet." *ZAW* 53 (1935): 209-39.
——— "Jeremia der Fremdvölkerprophet II." *ZAW* 53 (1935): 240-62.
Bellis, Alice Ogden. *The Structure and Composition of Jeremiah 50:2-51:58.* Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen Biblical Press, 1995.
Berlin, Adele. "Jeremiah 29:5-7: A Deuteronomic Allusion." *HAR* 8 (1984): 3-11.
Berridge, J. *Prophet, People and Word of Yahweh: An Examination of Form and Content in the Proclamation of the Prophet Jeremiah.* Basel Studies of Theology 4. Zuurich: EVZ, 1970.
Boer, P. A. H. de. "Jeremiah 45, Verse 5." In *Symbolae Biblicae et Mesopotamicae Francisco Mario Theodoro de Liagre Böhl Dedicatae*, eds. M. A. Beek, A. A. Kampman, C. Nijland and J. Ryckmans. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973, 32-37.
Bogaert, P.- M. ed. *Le Livre de Jérémie: le prophète et son mileu les oracles et leur transmission.* BETL 54. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1981.
Boyle, Brian. *Fire in the City: A Synchronic (Narrative Critical) and Diachronic Reading of the Interviews Between Zedekiah and Jeremiah in Jeremiah 37:1 - 38:28a.* Excerpta ex Dissertatione ad Doctoratum in Facultate Theologiae Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae. Roma: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1997.
Bozak, Barbara A. *Life "Anew": A Literary-Theological Study of Jer. 30-31.* AnBib 122. Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1991.
Bright, John. *Jeremiah.* AB 21. New York: Doubleday, 1965.
Brongers, H. A. "Der Zornesbecher." In *Oudtestamentische Studien 15.* Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969, 177-92.
Brueggemann, Walter. *To Pluck Up, To Tear Down: A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah 1-25.* International Theological Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
——— *To Build, To Plant: Jeremiah 26-52.* International Theological Commentary. Grand Rapids/Edinburgh: Eerdmans/Handsel, 1991.
——— "Jeremiah: Intense Criticism/Thin Interpretation." *Int* 42 (1988): 268-80.
——— "At the Mercy of Babylon: A Subversive Rereading of the Empire." *JBL* 110 (1991): 3-22.
——— "A Shattered Transcendence? Exile and Restoration." In *Old Testament Theology: Essays on Structure, Theme, and Text.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992, 183-203.

————— "At the Mercy of Babylon: A Subversive Rereading of Empire." In *A So-cial Reading of the Old Testament: Prophetic Approaches to Israel's Communal Life*, ed. Patrick D. Miller. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1994, 111-33.

Budde, C. "Über die Capitel 50 und 51 des Buches Jeremia." *Jahrbücher für Deut-scher Theologie* 23 (1878): 429-70, 529-62.

Carroll Robert P. "A Non-Cogent Argument in Jeremiah's Oracles Agains the Prophets." *Studia Theologica* 30 (1976): 43-51.

————— *From Chaos to Covenant: Uses of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah.* London: SCM, 1981.

————— "Prophecy, Dissonance, and Jeremiah xxvi." In *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies*, eds. L. G. Perdue and B. W. Kovacs. Eisenbrauns, 1984, 381-91.

————— *Jeremiah.* OTL. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986.

————— "Dismantling the Book of Jeremiah and Deconstructing the Prophet." In *Wünschet Jerusalem Frieden.* Collected Communications to the XIIth Con-gress of the International Organisation for the Study of the Old Testament, Jerusalem, 1986, eds. Matthias Augustin and Klaus-Dietrich Schunck. Bei-träge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums 13. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988, 291-302.

————— "Radical Clashes of Will and Style: Recent Commentary Writing on the Book of Jeremiah." *JSOT* 45 (1989): 99-114.

————— "The Myth of the Empty Land." *Semeia* 59 (1992): 79-93.

————— "Synchronic Deconstructions of Jeremiah: Diachrony to the Rescue?" In *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*, ed. Johannes C. de Moor. Leiden/New York/Köln: E. J. Brill, 1995, 39-51.

————— "Surplus of Meaning and the Conflict of Interpretations: A Dodecade of Jeremiah Studies (1984-1995)." *Currents in Research* 4 (1996): 115-59.

Clements, R. E. *Jeremiah.* Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Atlanta: John Knox, 1988.

————— "The Macro-Structures of Jeremiah 1-25 and the Deuteronomistic His-tory." Paper Presented at the SBL Annual Meeting, October 1992. San Fran-cisco, 1992.

Cook, Johann. "The Difference in the Order of the Books of the Hebrew and Greek Versions of Jeremiah — Jeremiah 43 (50): a case study." *Old Testa-ment Essays* 7 (1994): 175-92.

Cornill, Carl H. *Das Buch Jeremia.* Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1905.

Diamond, A. R. *The Confessions of Jeremiah in Context: Scenes of Prophetic Drama.* JSOTSup 45. Sheffield: JSOT, 1987.

Duhm, B. *Das Buch Jeremia.* Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament XI. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (P. Siebeck), 1901.

Fensham, F. C. "Nebukadrezzar in the Book of Jeremiah." *JNSL* 10 (1982): 53-65.

Fischer, Georg. "Jer 25 und die Fremdvölkerspruuche: Unterschiede zwischen hebräischem und griechischem Text." *Bib* 72 (1991): 474-99.

Fohrer, Georg. "Abgewiesene Klage und untersagte Fürbitte (Jer 14,2-15,2)." In *Studien zum Alten Testament (1966-1988)*, ed. Otto Kaiser. BZAW 196. Ber-lin/New York: de Gruyter, 1991, 45-55.

————— "Vollmacht über Völker und Königreiche (Jer 46-51)." In *Studien zur alttestamentlichen Texten und Themen (1966-1972).* BZAW 155. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1981, 44-52.

Giesebrecht, Friedrich. *Das Buch Jeremia.* HAT 3. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ru-precht, 1894.

Gosse, Bernard. "Jérémie xlv et la place du ricueil d'oracles contre les nations dans le livre de Jérémie." *VT* XL (1990): 145-51.

Graupner, Axel. *Auftrag und Geschick des Propheten Jeremia: literarische Eigenart, Herkunft und Intention vordeuteronomistischer Prosa im Jeremiabuch.* BTS 15. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991.

———— "Jeremia 45 als Schlußwort des Jeremiabuches." In *Altes Testament und Christliche Verkündigung: Festschrift für Antonius H.J. Gunneweg zum 65. Geburtstag.* Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1987, 287-308.

Hardmeier, Christof. *Prophetie im Streit vor dem Untergang Judas: erzählkommunikative Studien zur Entstehungssituation der Jesaja- und Jeremiaerzählungen in II Reg 18-20 und Jer 37-40.* BZAW 187. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1990.

Herrmann, Siegfried. *Jeremia.* BKAT. Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986.

Hill, John. *The 'Return' Motif in Jeremiah 24.* Dissertation (Theol.M.) Melbourne College of Divinity. 1983.

Holladay, William L. "Prototypes and Copies: A New Approach to the Poetry-Prose Problem in the Book of Jeremiah." *JBL* 79 (1960): 351-67.

———— "The Recovery of Poetic Passages in Jeremiah." *JBL* 85 (1966): 401-35.

———— "The Covenant with the Patriarchs Overturned: Jeremiah's Intention in 'Terror on Every Side' (Jer 20:1-6)." *JBL* 91 (1972): 305-20.

———— "A Fresh Look at 'Source B' and 'Source C' in Jeremiah." *VT* 25 (1975): 394-412.

———— *The Architecture of Jeremiah 1-20.* Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1976.

———— "The Identification of the Two Scrolls of Jeremiah." *VT* 30 (1980): 452-67.

———— *Jeremiah 1. A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-25.* Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986.

———— *Jeremiah 2. A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah Chapters 26-52.* Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989.

Hopper, Stanley Romaine. "Jeremiah: Exposition." In *The Interpreter's Bible,* ed. G. Buttrick. New York/Nashville: Abingdon, 1956, 5:794-1142.

Hyatt, J. Philip. "The Beginning of Jeremiah's Prophecy." *ZAW* 78 (1966): 204-14.

———— "Jeremiah: Exegesis." In *The Interpreter's Bible,* ed. G. Buttrick. New York/Nashville: Abingdon, 1956, 5:794-1142.

Janzen, J. Gerald. *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah.* HSS 6. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973.

Jobling, David. "Review of Timothy Polk, *The Prophetic Persona: Jeremiah and the Language of the Self.*" *JBL* 106 (1987): 122-23.

Jones, Douglas Rawlinson. *Jeremiah.* NCB Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.

Kessler, Martin. "Form-Critical Suggestions on Jeremiah 36." *CBQ* 28 (1966): 389-401.

———— "From Drought to Exile: A Morphological Study of Jer 14:1-15:4." In *Society of Biblical Literature 1972 Seminar Papers,* ed. Lane C. McGaughy. Cambridge: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972, 501-25.

Kilpp, Nelson. *Niederreißen und aufbauen: das Verhältnis von Heilsverheißung und Unheilsverkündigung bei Jeremia und im Jeremiabuch.* Biblisch-theologische Studien 13. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990.

Lewin, Ellen Davis. "Arguing for Authority: A Rhetorical Study of Jeremiah 1.4-19 and 20.7-18." *JSOT* 32 (1985): 105-19.

Lundbom, J. R. "Baruch, Seraiah, and Expanded Colophons in the Book of Jeremiah." *JSOT* 36 (1986): 115-28.

———— *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric.* SBLDS 18. Montana: University of Montana Press, 1975.

———— "Review of Timothy Polk, *The Prophetic Persona: Jeremiah and the Language of the Self.*" *CBQ* 48 (1986): 727-29.

Lust, J. "'Gathering and Return' in Jeremiah and Ezekiel." In *Le Livre de Jérémie: le prophète et son milieu, les oracles et leur transmission*, eds. P.- M. Bogaert and J. Lust. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1981, 119-42.

McKane, William. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah.* Vol. 1. ICC. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986.

———— *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah.* Vol. 2. ICC. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996.

Margaliot, M. "Jeremiah X 1-16: A Re-examination." *VT* 30 (1980): 295-308.

Martens, Elmer A. *Motivations for the Promise of Israel's Restoration to the Land in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.* Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1972.

Marx, Alfred. "A propos des doublets du livre de Jérémie: Réflexions sur la formation d'un livre propheatique." In *Prophecy: Essays Presented to Georg Fohrer on His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. J. A. Emerton. BZAW 150. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1980, 106-20.

Mendecki, Norbert. "Die Sammlung und die Hineinführung in das Land in Jer 23,3." *Kairos* 25 (1983): 99-103.

Mowinckel, Sigmund. *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia.* Kristiana: Dybwad, 1914.

Nasuti, Harry P. "A Prophet to the Nations: Diachronic and Synchronic Readings of Jeremiah 1." *Hebrew Annual Review* 10 (1986): 249-86.

Nicholson, E. W. *Preaching to the Exiles: A Study of the Prose Tradition in the Book of Jeremiah.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1967.

Noutscher, Friedrich. *Das Buch Jeremia.* Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments 7,2. Bonn: Hanstein, 1934.

O'Connor, Kathleen M. *The Confessions of Jeremiah: Their Interpretation and Role in Chapters 1-25.* SBLDS 94. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.

———— "'Do not Trim a Word': The Contributions of Chapter 26 to the Book of Jeremiah." *CBQ* 52 (1989): 617-30.

Overholt, Thomas W. "The Falsehood of Idolatry: An Interpretation of Jer. X 1-16." *JTS* NS 16 (1965): 1-12.

———— "King Nebuchadnezzar in the Jeremiah Tradition." *CBQ* 30 (1968): 39-48.

———— *The Threat of Falsehood.* SBT Second Series 16. London: SCM, 1970.

———— "Interpreting Jeremiah." *RSR* 14 (1988): 330-34.

Paterson, Robert M. "Reinterpretation in the Book of Jeremiah." *JSOT* 28 (1984): 37-46.

Perdue, Leo. G. "Jeremiah in Modern Research: Approaches and Issues." In *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies*, eds. Leo G. Perdue and B. Kovacs. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1984, 1-32.

Pohlmann, Karl-Friedrich. *Studien zum Jeremiabuch: Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Entstehung des Jeremiabuches.* FRLANT 118. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978.

Polk, Timothy. *The Prophetic Persona: Jeremiah and the Language of the Self.* JSOTSup Series 32. Sheffield: JSOT, 1984.

Raitt, Thomas M. *A Theology of Exile: Judgment/Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977.

Reimer, David J. "The 'Foe' and the 'North' in Jeremiah." *ZAW* 98 (1986): 223-32.

———— *The Oracles Against Babylon in Jeremiah 50-51: A Horror Among the Nations.* San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1993.

Renaud, B. "Jer 1: structure et théologie de la rédaction." In *Le Livre de Jérémie: le prophète et son milieu, les oracles et leur transmission*, ed. P.- M. Bogaert. BETL 54. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1980, 177-96.

Rendtorff, Rolf. "Zum Gebrauch der Formel *ne'um Yahweh* im Jeremiabuch." ZAW 66 (1954): 27-57.

Reventlow, Henning Graf. *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich bei Jeremiah.* Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963.

Rietzschel, Claus. *Das Problem der Urrolle: ein Beitrag zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Jeremiabuches.* Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1966.

Rofea, Alexander. "The Arrangement of the Book of Jeremiah." ZAW 101 (1989): 390-98.

Rosenberg, A. J. *Jeremiah: A New English Translation.* Translation of Text, Rashi and Commentary. New York: Judaica, 1985.

Rosenberg, Joel. "Jeremiah and Ezekiel." In *The Literary Guide to the Bible,* ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode. Cambridge: Belknap, 1987, 184-206.

Rowley, H. "The Early Prophecies of Jeremiah in Their Setting." BJRL 45 (1962): 198-234.

Rudolph, Wilhelm. *Jeremia.* HAT 12. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (3rd Edition), 1968.

Schenker, Adrian. "Nebukadnezzars Metamorphose vom Unterjocher zum Gottesknecht: das Bild Nebukadnezzars und einige mit ihm zusammenhängende Unterschiede in den beiden Jeremia-Rezensionen." RB 89 (1982): 498-527.

Schwally, Friedrich. "Die Reden des Buches Jeremia gegen die Heiden. XXV. XLVI-LI." ZAW 8 (1888): 177-217.

Seitz, Christopher R. "The Prophet Moses and the Canonical Shape of Jeremiah." ZAW 101 (1989): 3-27.

——— Theology in Conflict: Reactions to Exile in the Book of Jeremiah. BZAW 176. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1989.

Sisson, Jonathan Paige. "Jeremiah and the Jerusalem Conception of Peace." *JBL* 105 (1986): 429-42.

Skinner, John. *Prophecy and Religion: Studies in the Life of Jeremiah.* Cambridge: University Press, 1936.

Smith, Mark S. *The Laments of Jeremiah and Their Contexts.* SBL Monograph Series 42. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990.

Stipp, Hermann-Josef. *Das masoretische und alexandrinische Sondergut des Jeremiabuches: textgeschichtlicher Rang, Eigenarten, Triebkräfte.* OBO 136. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1994.

Stulman, Louis. "Insiders and Outsiders in the Book of Jeremiah: Shifts in Symbolic Arrangements." In *The Prophets: A Sheffield Reader, ed.* Philip R. Davies. The Biblical Seminar 42. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996, 292-312.

——— *The Other Text of Jeremiah: A Reconstruction of the Hebrew Text Underlying the Greek Version of the Prose Sections of Jeremiah With English Translation.* London/New York: Lanham, 1986.

Taylor, Marion Ann. "Jeremiah 45: The Problem of Placement." *JSOT* 37 (1987): 79-98.

Thiel, Winfried. *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1-25.* WMANT 41. Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973.

——— *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26-45.* WMANT 52. Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981.

Thomas, D. Winton. "מלאו in Jeremiah IV.5: A Military Term." *JJS* 3 (1952): 47-52.

Thompson, J. A. *Jeremiah.* NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.

Tov, Emmanuel. "The Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah in the Light of Its Textual History." In *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism,* ed. Jeffrey Tigay. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985, 211-37.

Unterman, Jeremiah. *From Repentance to Redemption: Jeremiah's Thought in Transition.* JSOTSup 54. Sheffield: JSOT, 1987.

Wanke, Gunther. *Untersuchungen zur Sogennanten Baruchschrift.* BZAW 122. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971.

Watts, James W. "Text and Redaction in Jeremiah's Oracles Against the Nations." *CBQ* 54 (1992): 432-47.

Weippert, Helga. "Jahwekrieg und Bundesfluch in Jer 21:1-7." *ZAW* 82 (1970): 396-409.

———— *Die Prosareden des Jeremiabuches.* BZAW 136. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973.

———— *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde: ein Beitrag zur Theologie des Jeremiabuches.* Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 102. Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1981.

———— "Schöpfung und Heil in Jer 45." In *Schöpfung und Befreiung: für Claus Westermann zum 80. Geburtstag,* eds. Rainer Albertz, Friedemann W. Golka, and Jürgen Kegler. Stuttgart: Calwer, 1989, 92-103.

Weiser, Artur. *Das Buch des Propheten Jeremia.* ATD 20. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1952.

Whitley, C. "The Term 'Seventy Years Captivity'" *VT* 4 (1954): 60-72.

Wolff, Christian. *Jeremia im Frühjudentum und Urchristentum.* TU 118. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976.

Zevit, Ziony. "The Use of עָבַד as a Diplomatic Term in Jeremiah." *JBL* 88 (1969): 74-77.

Other Works

Ackroyd, P. R. "Two Old Testament Historical Problems of the Early Persian Period." *JNES* XVII (1958): 23-27.

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative.* New York: Basic Books Inc., 1981.

———— *The Art of Biblical Poetry.* New York: Basic Books Inc., 1985.

Barton, John. *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile.* London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986.

Berlin, Adele. *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative.* The Bible and Literature Series. Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1983.

Berquist, Jon. *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.

Boorer, Sue. "The Kerygmatic Intention of the Priestly Document." *AusBR* 25 (1977): 12-20.

Botterweck, G. Johannes. "בהמה." In *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament,* eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, and Helmer Ringgren. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975, 2:6-20.

Childs, Brevard S. "The Enemy from the North and the Chaos Tradition." *JBL* 78 (1959): 187-98.

———— *Exodus.* OTL. Louisville: Westminster, 1974.

———— *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture.* London: SCM, 1979.

Christensen, Duane L. *Prophecy and War in Ancient Israel.* BIBAL Monograph Series 3. BIBAL: Berkeley, 1989.

Clements, R. E. *God and Temple: The Idea of the Divine Presence in Ancient Israel.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1965.

———— *Isaiah 1-39.* NCB. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.

———— "Prophecy as Literature: A Re-Appraisal." In *The Hermeneutical Quest: Essays in Honour of James Luther Mays on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday,* ed. Donald G. Miller. Allison Park, Penn: Pickwick, 1986, 59-76.

———— *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives.* Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Clifford, Richard J. *Fair Spoken and Persuading: An Interpretation of Second Isaiah.* New York: Paulist, 1984.

Coggins, R. J. "The Origins of the Jewish Diaspora." In *The World of Ancient Israel: Social, Anthropological and Political Perspectives*, ed. R. E. Clements. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 163-81.

Collins, John J. *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.

Davies, G. I. "The Destiny of the Nations in the Book of Isaiah." In *The Book of Isaiah*, ed. J. Vermeylen. BETL 81. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989, 93-120.

Davis, Ellen F. *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel's Prophecy*. JSOTSup 78. Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1989.

De Vries, Simon J. *From Old Revelation to New: A Traditio-Historical and Redaction-Critical Study of Temporal Transitions in Prophetic Predictions*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995.

Deist, Ferdinand E. "The Prophets: Are We Heading for a Paradigm Switch?" In *Prophet und Prophetenbuch: Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Karl-Friedrich Polhmann, Fritz Volkmar, Hans-Christopher Schmidt. BZAW 165. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1989, 1-18.

Dobbs-Allsopp, F. W. *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible*. BibOr 44. Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993.

Donaldson, Mara E. *Holy Places Are Dark Places: C. S. Lewis and Paul Ricoeur on Narrative Transformation*. Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1988.

Duhm, B. *Das Buch Jesaia*. HKAT 3.1. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892.

Erlandsson, Seth. *The Burden of Babylon: A Study of Isaiah 13:2-14:23*. ConBOT 4. Lund, Sweden: CWK Gleerup, 1970.

Eskenazi, Tamara Cohn. *In An Age of Prose: A Literary Approach to Ezra-Nehemiah*. SBL Monograph Series 36. Atlanta: Scholars, 1988.

Even-Shoshan, Abraham. *A New Concordance of the Old Testament*. Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1985.

Evans, Jeanne. *Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of the Imagination*. American University Studies: series 7; Theology and Religion 143. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.

Fishbane, Michael. *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1991.

———— *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts*. New York: Schocken, 1979.

Fitzgerald, Aloysius. "*BTWLT* and *BT* as Titles for Capital Cities." *CBQ* 37 (1975): 167-83.

———— "The Mythological Background for the Presentation of Jerusalem as a Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the OT." *CBQ* 34 (1972): 403-16.

Fitzmyer, Joseph A. "The Aramaic Suzerainty Treaty from Sefirê in the Museum of Beirut." *CBQ* 20 (1958): 444-76.

Follis, Elaine R. "The Holy City as Daughter." In *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. Elaine R. Follis. JSOTSup 40. Sheffield: JSOT, 1987, 173-84.

Franke, Chris. *Isaiah 46, 47, and 48: A New Literary-Critical Reading*. Biblical and Judaic Studies 3. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994.

Franke, Chris A. "The Function of the Oracles Against Babylon in Isaiah 14 and 47." In *Society of Biblical Literature 1993 Seminar Papers*, eds. Eugene H. Lovering Jr., Chris A. Franke. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993, 250-259.

Franzmann, Majella. "The City as Woman: The Case of Babylon in Isaiah 47." *AusBR* 43 (1995): 1-19.

Frye, Northrop. *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*. New York: Harvest/HBJ, 1983.

Gerstenberger, Erhard S. *Leviticus: A Commentary*. OTL. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996.

Gosse, Bernard. *Isaïe 13,1-14,23*. OBO 78. Freiburg Schweiz/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988.

Grabbe, Lester L. "'The End of the Desolations of Jerusalem': From Jeremiah's 70 Years to Daniel's 70 Weeks of Years." In *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownlee*, eds. Craig A. Evans and William F. Stinespring Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987, 67-72.

Gray, John. *I & II Kings*. OTL. London: SCM, 1970.

Green, Alberto R. "The Chronology of the Last Days of Judah: Two Apparent Discrepancies." *JBL* 101 (1982): 57-73.

Groves, Joseph W. *Actualization and Interpretation in the Old Testament*. SBLDS 86. Atlanta: Scholars, 1987.

Gunkel, Hermann. *Genesis*. 7. Auflage, 1966. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1901.

Hahn, Lewis Edwin (ed.). *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. The Library of Living Philosophers; vol. 22. Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1995.

Hals, Ronald M. *Ezekiel*. FOTL 19. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

Hamborg, G. R. "Reasons for Judgement in the Oracles Against the Nations of the Prophet Isaiah." *VT* 31 (1981): 145-59.

Hanson, Paul D. *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979 (revised edition).

Hayes, John H. "The Usage of Oracles Against Foreign Nations in Ancient Israel." *JBL* 87 (1968): 81-92.

Janssen, Enno. *Juda in der Exilszeit: ein Beitrag zur Frage der Entstehung des Judentums*. FRLANT 69. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1956.

Jasper, David. "Time and Narrative: Reflections from Paul Ricoeur." *HeyJ* 34 (1993): 302-06.

Jones, Douglas. "The Tradition of the Oracles of Isaiah of Jerusalem." *ZAW* 67 (1955): 226-46.

Kautzsch, E. ed. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Second English Edition. A. E. Cowley (trans). Oxford: Clarendon, 1910.

Kaiser, Otto. *Isaiah 1-12*. OTL. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983.

———— *Isaiah 13-39*. OTL. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974.

Knibb, Michael A. "Exile in the Damascus Document." *JSOT* 25 (1983): 99-117.

———— "The Exile in the Literature of the Intertestamental Period." *HeyJ* 17 (1976): 253-72.

Koch, Klaus. *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form Critical Method*. Aberdeen: University Press, 1969.

Kraus, Hans-Joachim. *Theology of the Psalms*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986.

Lohfink, Norbert. "Die Gattung der 'historischen Kurzgeschichte' in den letzten Jahren von Juda und in der Zeit des babylonischen Exils." *ZAW* 90 (1978): 319-47.

McConville, J. G., and J. G. Millar. *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*. JSOTSup 179. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994.

McKane, W. "Poison, Trial by Ordeal and the Cup of Wrath." *VT* 30 (1980): 474-92.

McLaughlin, Thomas. "Figurative Language." In *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, eds. Frank Lentriccia and Thomas McLaughlin. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990, 80-90.

McNamara, Martin. "Nabonidus and the Book of Daniel." *ITQ* 37 (1970): 131-49.

Mandelkern, S. *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae Atque Chaldaicae*. Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1964.

Martin-Achard, R. "Esaïe 47 et la tradition prophétique sur Babylone." In *Prophecy: Essays Presented to Georg Fohrer on His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. J. A. Emerton. BZAW 150. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1980, 83-105.

Mayes, A. D. H. *Deuteronomy*. NCB Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981.

Mays, Jame Luther, David L. Petersen, and Kent Harold Richards, eds. *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present and Future: Essays in Honor of Gene M. Tucker.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1995.

Meagher, Gerard. "The Prophetic Call Narrative." *ITQ* 39 (1972): 164-77.

Melugin, Roy F. *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55.* BZAW 141. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1976.

Moore, Carey A. *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The Additions.* AB 44. New York: Doubleday, 1977.

Motyer, J. Alec. *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary.* Downs Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

Muilenburg, James. "The Book of Isaiah 40-66: Exegesis." In *The Interpreter's Bible,* ed. George Arthur Buttrick. New York/Nashville: Abingdon, 1956, 5:381-773.

———— "Form Criticism and Beyond." *JBL* 88 (1969): 1-18.

Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects.* Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Secker and Warburg, 1961.

Niditch, Susan. "Ezekiel 40-48 in a Visionary Context." *CBQ* 48 (1986): 208-24.

Noth, Martin. *The Deuteronomistic History.* JSOTSup 15. Sheffield: JSOT, 1981.

O'Brien, Mark. *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment.* OBO 92. Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1989.

Ollenburger, Ben C. Zion, *The City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult.* JSOTSup 41. Sheffield: JSOT, 1987.

Oswalt, John N. *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39.* NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.

Perdue, Leo G. *The Collapse of History: Reconstructing Old Testament Theology.* Overtures to Biblical Theology. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994.

Petersen, David L. *Haggai & Zechariah 1-8.* OTL. London: SCM, 1984.

———— *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi.* OTL. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995.

Polzin, Robert. *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History. Part Two: 1 Samuel.* Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989.

Porteous, Norman. "Jerusalem-Zion: The Growth of a Symbol." In *Living the Mystery.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1967, 93-111.

Rad, Gerhard von. *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays.* London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966.

Reid, Stephen Breck, ed. *Prophets and Paradigms: Essays in Honor of Gene M. Tucker.* JSOTSup 229. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996.

Rendtorff, Rolf. "The Book of Isaiah: A Complex Unity. Synchronic and Diachronic Reading." In *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers,* ed. Eugene H. Lovering Jr. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991, 8-20.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning.* Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976.

———— "Metaphor and the Central Problem of Hermeneutics." In *Paul Ricoeur: Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences,* ed. and trans. John B. Thompson. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981, 165-181.

———— *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination,* ed. Mario J. Valdés. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.

———— *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language.* London: Routledge, 1994.

———— *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination,* ed. Mark I. Wallace. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.

Scharlemann, Robert P. "The Textuality of Texts." In *Meanings in Texts and Actions: Questioning Paul Ricoeur,* ed. David E. Klemm and William Schweiker. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1993, 13-25.

Schmitt, John J. "Gender Correctness and Biblical Metaphors: The Case of God's Relation to Israel." *BTB* 26 (1996): 96-106.

——— "Israel and Zion – Two Gendered Images: Biblical Speech Traditions and Their Contemporary Neglect." *Horizons* 18 (1991): 18-32.

——— "The Virgin of Israel: Referent and Use of the Phrase in Amos and Jeremiah." *CBQ* 53 (1991): 365-87.

Schramm, Brooks. *The Opponents of Third Isaiah: Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration.* JSOTSup 193. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.

Seitz, Christopher R. *Isaiah 1-39.* Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: John Knox, 1993.

——— "On the Question of Divisions Internal to the Book of Isaiah." In *Society of Biblical Literature 1993 Seminar Papers,* ed. Eugene H. Lovering Jr. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993, 260-266.

——— *Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah: A Reassessment of Isaiah 36-39.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.

Ska, Jean Louis. *"Our Fathers Have Told Us": Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives.* Subsidia Biblica 13. Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1990.

Smith, Jonathan Z. *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

——— *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual.* Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

——— *Map Is Not Territory.* Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Soggin, J. Alberto. "Der prophetische Gedanke über den heiligen Krieg, als Gericht gegen Israel." *VT* 10 (1960): 79-83.

Steinberg, Meir. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading.* Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Sweeney, Marvin A. *Isaiah 1-4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition.* BZAW 171. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1988.

——— *Isaiah 1-39: With an Introduction to Prophetic Literature.* FOTL 16. Grand Rapids/Cambridge UK: William B. Eerdmans, 1996.

——— "Reevaluating Isaiah 1-39 in Recent Critical Research." *Currents in Research* 4 (1996): 79-113.

Sweeney, Robert. "A Survey of Recent Ricoeur-Literature." *Philosophy Today* 29 (1985): 38-58.

Tucker, Gene M. "Prophetic Superscriptions and the Growth of a Canon." In *Canon and Authority,* ed. George W. Coats, and Burke O. Long. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977, 56-70.

Vermeylen, J., ed. *The Book of Isaiah.* BETL 81. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989.

Watts, John D. W. *Isaiah 1-33.* WBC 24. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985.

——— *Isaiah 34-66.* WBC 25. Waco: Word Books, 1987.

Webb, Barry G. "Zion in Transformation: A Literary Approach to Isaiah." In *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield,* ed. David J. A. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl, and Stanley E. Porter. JSOTSup 87. Sheffield: JSOT, 1990, 63-84.

Weinfeld, M. *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1974.

Westermann, Claus. *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech.* London: Lutterworth, 1967.

——— *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary.* Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985.

——— *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary.* Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986.

White, Erin. "Between Suspicion and Hope: Paul Ricoeur's Vital Hermeneutic." *Journal of Literature & Theology* 5 (1991): 311-21.

Wildberger, Hans. *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary.* A Continental Commentary. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.

—— *Jesaja.* BKAT 10. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972-82.

Williamson, H. G. M. *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1994.

Wright, N. T. *The New Testament and the People of God.* Christian Origins and The Question of God, vol. 1. London: SPCK, 1992.

Zimmerli, Walther. *Ezekiel 1.* Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.

—— *Ezekiel 2.* Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.

Computer Software

Bible Windows 2.2. Cedar Hill TX: Silver Mountain Software, 1992.

Nota Bene 4.5 Lingua Workstation. New York: Nota Bene Associates, 1995.

SUBJECT INDEX

AUTHOR INDEX

INDEX OF BIBLICAL TEXTS

Jeremiah

LXX

INDEX OF OTHER BIBLICAL TEXTS

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION SERIES

The *Biblical Interpretation Series* accommodates monographs, collections of essays and works of reference that are concerned with the discussion or application of new methods of interpreting the Bible. Works published in the series ordinarily either give a practical demonstration of how a particular approach may be instructively applied to a Biblical text or texts, or make a productive contribution to the discussion of method. The series thus provides a vehicle for the exercise and development of a whole range of newer techniques of interpretation, including feminist readings, semiotic, post-structuralist, reader-response and other types of literary readings, liberation-theological readings, ecological readings, and psychological readings, among many others.

1. van Dijk-Hemmes, F. & A. Brenner. *On Gendering Texts.* Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible. 1993. ISBN 90 04 09642 6
2. van Tilborg, S. *Imaginative Love in John.* 1993. ISBN 90 04 09716 3
3. Danove, P.L. *The End of Mark's Story.* A Methodological Study. 1993. ISBN 90 04 09717 1
4. Watson, D.F. & A.J. Hauser. *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible.* A Comprehensive Bibliography with Notes on History and Method. 1994. ISBN 90 04 09903 4
5. Seeley, D. *Deconstructing the New Testament.* 1994. ISBN 90 04 09880 1
6. van Wolde, E. *Words become Worlds.* Semantic Studies of Genesis 1-11. 1994. ISBN 90 04 098879
7. Neufeld, D. *Reconceiving Texts as Speech Acts.* An Analysis of 1 John. 1994. ISBN 90 04 09853 4
8. Porter, S.E., P. Joyce & D.E. Orton (eds.). *Crossing the Boundaries.* Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder. 1994. ISBN 90 04 10131 4
9. Yeo, K.-K. *Rhetorical Interaction in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10.* A Formal Analysis with Preliminary Suggestions for a Chinese, Cross-Cultural Hermeneutic. 1995. ISBN 90 04 10115 2
10. Letellier, R.I. *Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom.* Abraham and Lot in Genesis 18 and 19. 1995. ISBN 90 04 10250 7
11. O'Neill, J.C. *Who Did Jesus Think He Was?* 1995. ISBN 90 04 10429 1
12. Tolmie, D.F. *Jesus' Farewell to the Disciples.* John 13:1-17:26 in Narratological Perspective. 1995. ISBN 90 04 10270 1
13. Ryou, D.H. *Zephaniah's Oracles against the Nations.* A Synchronic and Diachronic Study of Zephaniah 2:1-3:8. 1995. ISBN 90 04 10311 2
14. Sonnet, J.-P. *The Book within the Book.* Writing in Deuteronomy. 1997. ISBN 90 04 10866 1

15. Seland, T. *Establishment Violence in Philo and Luke*. A Study of Non-Conformity to the Torah and Jewish Vigilante Reactions. 1995. ISBN 90 04 10252 3

16. Noble, P.R. *The Canonical Approach*. A Critical Reconstruction of the Hermeneutics of Brevard S. Childs. 1995. ISBN 90 04 10151 9

17. Schottroff, L.R. & M.-T. Wacker (Hrsg.). *Von der Wurzel getragen*. Christlich-feministische Exegese in Auseinandersetzung mit Antijudaismus. 1996. ISBN 90 04 10336 8

18. Becking, B. & M. Dijkstra (eds.). *On Reading Prophetic Texts*. Gender-Specific and Related Studies in Memory of Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes. 1996. ISBN 90 04 10274 4

19. Brett, M.G. (ed.). *Ethnicity and the Bible*. 1996. ISBN 90 04 10317 1

20. Henderson, I.H. *Jesus, Rhetoric and Law*. 1996. ISBN 90 04 10377 5

21. Rutledge, D. *Reading Marginally*. Feminism, Deconstruction and the Bible. 1996. ISBN 90 04 10564 6

22. Culpepper, R.A. (ed.). *Critical Readings of John 6*. 1997. ISBN 90 04 10579 4

23. Pyper, H.S. *David as Reader*. 2 Samuel 12:1-15 and the Poetics of Fatherhood. 1996. ISBN 90 04 10581 6

26. Brenner, A. *The Intercourse of Knowledge*. On Gendering Desire and 'Sexuality' in the Hebrew Bible. 1997. ISBN 90 04 10155 1

27. Beck, D.R. *The Discipleship Paradigm*. Readers and Anonymous Characters in the Fourth Gospel. 1997. ISBN 90 04 10700 2

28. Evans, C.A. & S. Talmon (eds.) *The Quest for Context and Meaning*. Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders. 1997. ISBN 90 04 10835 1

29. van Wolde, E. (ed.) *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible*. Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996. 1997. ISBN 90 04 10787 8

30. Dawes, G.W. *The Body in Question*. Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21-33. 1998. ISBN 90 04 10959 5

31. Neuenschwander, B. *Mystik im Johannesevangelium*. Eine hermeneutische Untersuchung aufgrund der Auseinandersetzung mit Zen-Meister Hisamatsu Shin'ichi. 1998. ISBN 90 04 11035 6

32. Resseguie, J.L. *Revelation Unsealed*. A Narrative Critical Approach to John's Apocalypse. 1998. ISBN 90 04 11129 8

33. Dyck, J.E. *The Theocratic Ideology of the Chronicler*. 1998. ISBN 90 04 11146 8

34. van Wieringen, A.L.H.M. *The Implied Reader in Isaiah 6–12*. 1998. ISBN 90 04 11222 7

35. Warning, W. *Literary Artistry in Leviticus*. 1999. ISBN 90 04 11235 9

36. Marais, J. *Representation in Old Testament Narrative Texts*. 1998. ISBN 90 04 11234 0

37. Siebert-Hommes, J. *Let the Daughters Live!* The Literary Architecture of Exodus 1-2 as a Key for Interpretation. 1998. ISBN 90 04 10778 9

This work presents a literary interpretation of Babylon in
the book of Jeremiah MT. It moves beyond historical-critical
approaches, which have long dominated Jeremiah research, and
shows that metaphor is central to a synchronic reading
of the book.
The study shows that Babylon is a multi-layered
metaphor: at one level it is the archetypal enemy of both
Judah and its God; at another level it is metaphorically identified
with Judah. The study also explores the idea of the unended exile,
and shows how this idea, so central to post-exilic Judaism, is
also found in the book of Jeremiah MT.

John Hill, D.Theol. (1998) in Biblical Studies, is
a lecturer at Yarra Theological Union in
the Melbourne College of Divinity.